

FAR OFF THE STREETS OF CLEVELAND: HARVEY PEKAR NOW

punk planet

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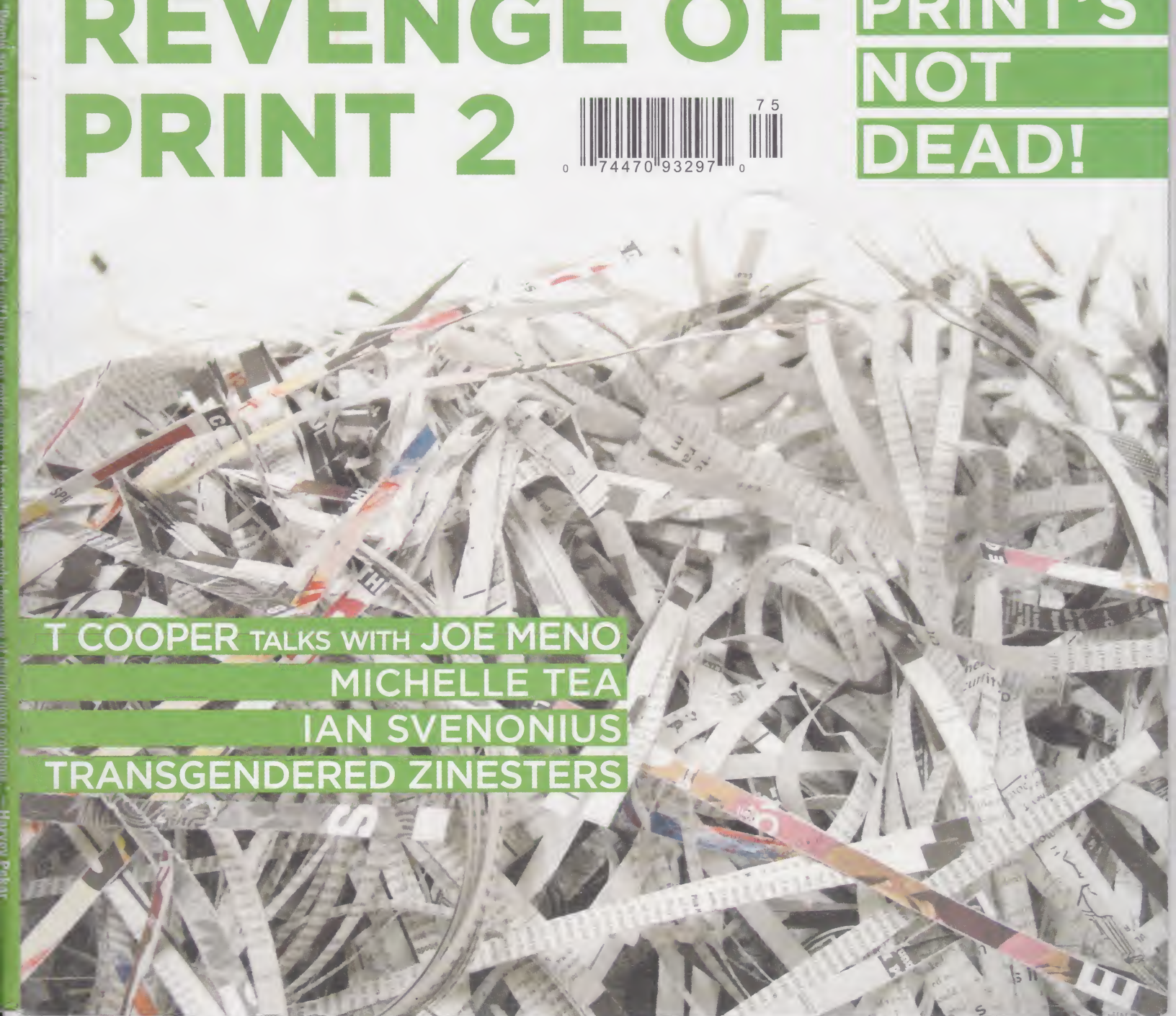
NOTES FROM UNDERGROUND

THE REVENGE OF PRINT 2

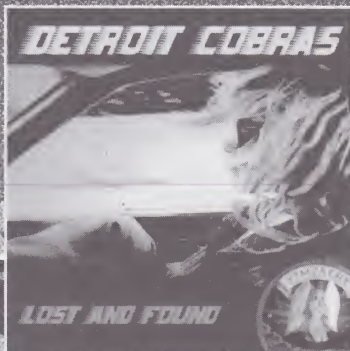


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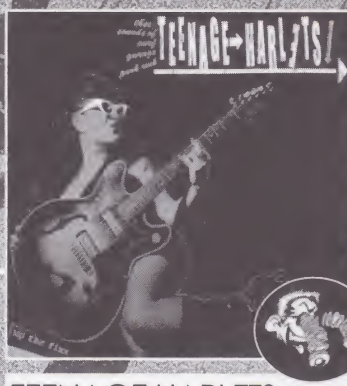
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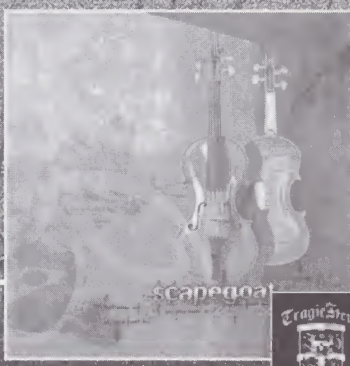
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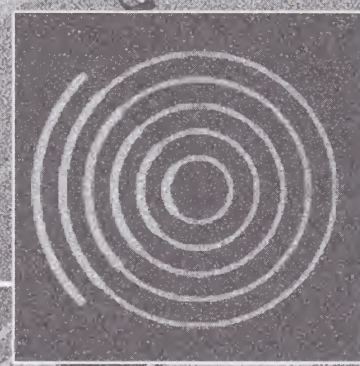
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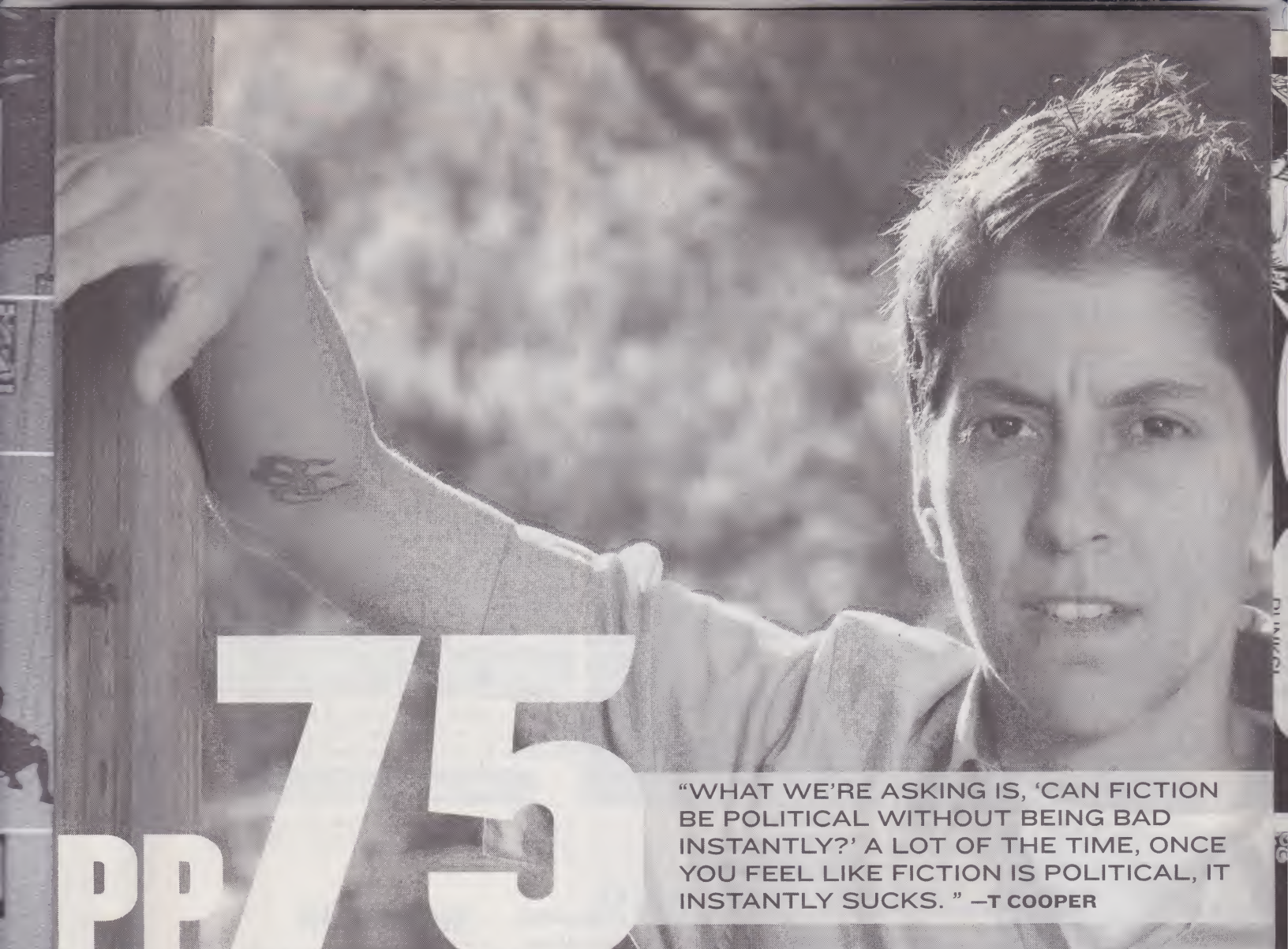
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PP 75

"WHAT WE'RE ASKING IS, 'CAN FICTION BE POLITICAL WITHOUT BEING BAD INSTANTLY?' A LOT OF THE TIME, ONCE YOU FEEL LIKE FICTION IS POLITICAL, IT INSTANTLY SUCKS." —T COOPER

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the risks

intro75

Before we begin, a quick history lesson: The printing press was invented 1200 years ago (give or take a few centuries). It was a powerful technology for its time—like the Internet, a flying car, and some straight-up magic all mixed together—and, like all powerful technologies, was both embraced and feared by the powers that be. Locked up for the next 700 years or so creating religious texts of one kind or another, print remained the exclusive domain of the world's elites. But, even while they concentrated their power, they must have known that they were sitting on a bomb poised to go off.

It was a bomb known as cheap, simple communication, and once it exploded, print flourished as a populist medium. The invention created trouble for the powerful at the same time that the powerful learned to exploit it to their own means. Bibles were replaced on the press by newspapers, by pornography, by fantasy and adventure, by hopes and dreams and the means to crush the very same. Print became the world, and the world became printed.

Which brings us to today.

Today, a millennia past the cranking of the first printing press, print is slowly being turned into tiny charges of electricity and flashes of light. While the migration from paper to the Internet may

be inevitable, it's nowhere close to complete. And while we still can, we thought it would be nice to once again celebrate those that continue to make books, zines, comics, and other wonderful pieces of printed matter (each of which, in turn, make print matter).

Welcome to the second installment in our "Revenge of Print" theme issues. It's been a while since our first—three years, actually. What's taken so long? Well, we've been busy making print of our own, with this magazine and our line of books, which continues to grow. In addition, we've been struggling with some of the harder aspects of print—like maintaining distribution of printed matter in an increasingly digital age. Yet mostly, we've been busy writing about all sorts of other parts of this amazing culture.

But we're back with "Revenge of Print 2" and with it comes another group of amazing writers, cartoonists, publishers, and more. Like our last Revenge issue, most of the interviews are accompanied by writing samples—a varied and engaging collection of texts that further demonstrate just how vital print still is.

There's a lot to read and think about in this issue; we hope you enjoy it as much as we have enjoyed putting it together for you.

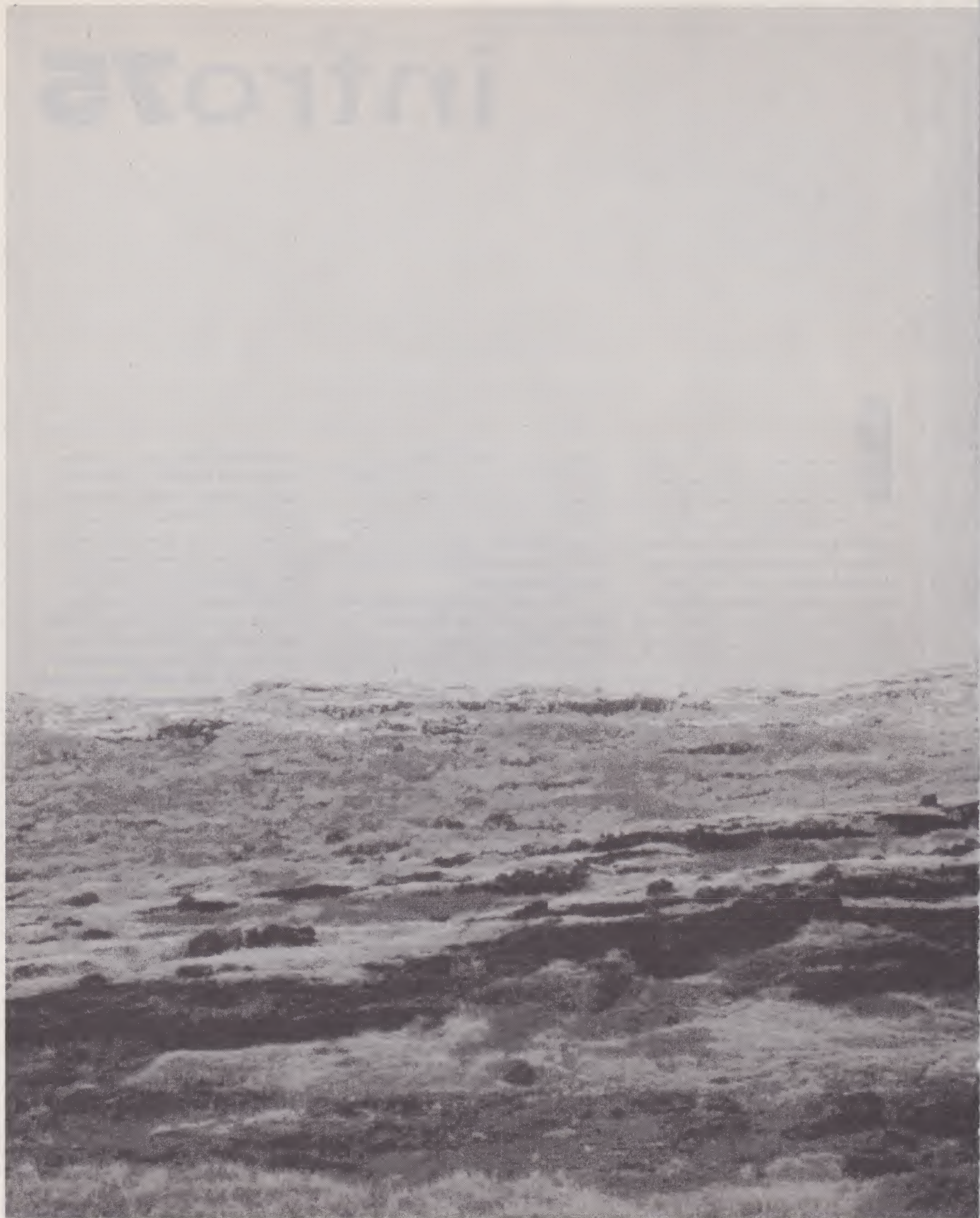
It's ironic in some ways to be doing the second "Revenge of Print" issue while

concurrently working on a ground-up rebuild of the *Punk Planet* website; but in other ways it only reinforces how vital print is—and how different the web is. Where print excels—portability, length, depth—is exactly where the web falls short. And where print stumbles—immediacy, interactivity, community—is where the web excels. While *Punk Planet* has been online for ten years or so, we've never had a website that fully addresses the strengths of the web. I'm happy to say that we now do. Log on and help build a truly independent online community through user blogs, robust forums, comments, and much more. It's an exciting new world for *Punk Planet*—join us.

Finally, we'd like to welcome two new columnists to the issue: Johnny Temple, who we work extensively with on our *Punk Planet Books* partnership, and Josh Hooten, who returns to *Punk Planet* after a multi-year hiatus. Both Johnny and Josh bring their unique voices to a revamped columns section. We'll be adding a few more voices into the mix as the year progresses, as well, so stay tuned.

Happy reading!

DAN



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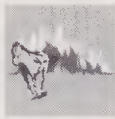
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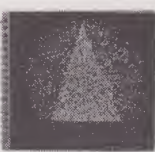
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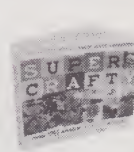
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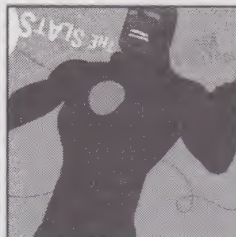


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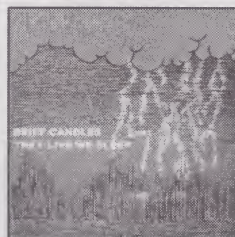


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[LF-14]



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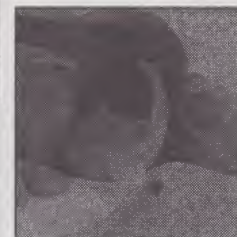


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SCANNING THE DIAL FOR LIFE ON THE MARGINS

Building the Printernet

WITH THE ADVENT OF BLOGS AND WEBSITES LIKE PAPER FOREST, THE DECIDEDLY PULP-BASED CRAFT OF PAPER MODELING ENTERS THE DIGITAL AGE

With so much concern and confusion (too often though not all alarmist) over the tenuous relationship between the Internet and print media, the online repository Paper Forest starts to suggest what the print/net dynamic duo could become. One of the best of a growing breed of blogs and websites dedicated to paper-craft models, Paper Forest posts links to paper model plans of all sorts: from animals intended as ornate decorative toys, to painstaking historical recreations of feudal Japan, to actually functional paper microscopes and other mechanisms (title: "Be a Paper Scientist"). Aspiring paper enthusiasts need only to download the plans (usually a PDF or image file), print them on any variety of paper-stocks to taste, and finally, assisted by cutlery and rubber cement, fold and fudge to Potemkin completion.

The real beauty of a paper-craft hobbyist revival driven by the web is that, for all its power as a field for distribution, digital paper models must be made physical again: they must be printed. This is no token analog re-emergence of mere convenience, as is the loophole of burning Digital Rights Management-protected tracks from iTunes to a CD solely for the purpose of re-ripping them to reclaim one's digital rights. It is certainly true that much of the most powerful online media today is made by a process of digitization, supplementing the analog—camera-phone images of last year's London subway bombing, or podcasts that untether radio stations from their terrestrial call signs. But we already know this, as liberating as this process has been. Digitally authored and distributed paper models, if lacking in

political weight, still offer an intriguing reverse flow: every image posted on Paper Forest and its brethren is intended to end up printed, folded, and held. As fragile as a paper monkey cuddled to the chest can be, this should be a comfort to fiercely analog zinesters, as well as to illustrators and graphic designers who may have largely gone digital but miss the texture, the smell, and even the unintentionally self-inflicted lacerations of print and pulp.

And for a craft that was predominantly "read-only" in its traditional incarnation, online paper-craft has eased the way for would-be DIY paper architects with some novel tools. Take Pepakura Designer, a 3D modeling program intended solely for creating one's own paper models. The software offers a kind of training wheels for the often tricky process of mentally peeling and pancaking an anticipated model into its pre-assembled, prostrate form. Feed Pepakura Designer any 3D model file, allow it to crunch and digest a heap of

numbers and triangles, and watch as it spits back its best-guess paper plan. But it's just that—a guess. Using Pepakura Designer is more of a negotiation than a one-stop-shop. The plans generated can be rough hewn, and this is where you, the paper auteur steps in, re-calibrating the tabs and juts as you see fit, exaggerating a comic angle here, flattening a particularly rearing protrusion there. Geometric modeling aside, a surprising amount of control over the process can also be expressed simply through the selections of paper one makes in the printing stage. Thickness, fiber, color, translucency: paper-craft construction is one part serious architecture, one part child fantasy-throwback, and one part hand-made zine design.

For the purest wow climax, Paper Forest's reposting (via pinhole.cz) of the Dirkon pinhole paper camera can't be beat. The Dirkon is a paper model that looks like an old camera—except that it also is an old camera. Originally printed in a 1979 Czech hob-



"This was the band I'd always wanted to be in since high school."

DESPITE THEIR HISTORICAL NAME, THE 1900s CRAFT BEAUTIFUL POP SONGS FOR TODAY

The 1900's build incredible pop melodies full of bright-sounding keyboards, dulcet violin, and sunny, boy/girl harmonies on *Plume Delivery*, a six-song EP out from Parasol Records. This wonderfully modern septet has drawn comparisons to the Velvet Underground, Belle and Sebastian, and the Zombies. Beneath the lush, layered arrangements lie the dreamy, melodious vocals shared by Edward Anderson, also the group's guitarist, Caroline Murphy and Jeanine O'Toole. The band's vocal dynamics, from honey-coated to Nico-like monotone, give their music an instantaneous hook. Each of them took a few moments to answer some questions about this up-and-coming Chicago band.

Edward, you mentioned that you began writing songs for the band months before you'd asked if Caroline and Jeanine wanted to join.

Anderson: This was the band I'd always wanted to be in since high school. I was on a trip somewhere and I had been thinking about this kind of band and so I put together every person that I wanted to be in the band in my mind, and then when I came back I made

byist magazine called *An ABC of Young Technicians and Natural Scientists*, the Dirkon is fully functioning and accepts any standard 35mm film, though David Baliyar, the amateur media archaeologist (and professional graphic designer) who unearthed this beauty has some modern recommendations to more closely match the qualities of the Communist-era brand. If you want to go all-out, take the ultimate Dirkon challenge and not only print the camera, but also develop and print your own film. Oddly enough, Baliyar's own striking snapshots on pinhole.cz themselves have a toy-model look lent by the soft focus and deep colors. Spurred by a mild digital photography backlash is the rising

hipness of distorting, analog Lomography cameras (for sale in no less than 5 shops in a 5 block radius of my Brooklyn home), so if you want to out-do your friends, make the Dirkon and show them what "digital" can be.

Paper Forest and the larger paper-craft community it signals is not the only avenue for fruitful digital-to-paper concoctions. There are other projects that seek this connection along alternative axes, such as Implementation, a novella distributed in chunks intended to be printed as stickers on standard mailing labels and pasted in public locations around the world. Reader-generated photographs of the stickers are then funneled back to the website for posting,

a dual analog-digital archive of the text. Rather than being concerned that the internet threatens our way of print, we should be playing with, twist-

ing, and folding what it offers into a shape more to our liking. The paperless office wasn't a failure for nothing.

—Brett Camper

Make the other kids on the playground jealous: Paper Forest can be consulted at paperforest.blogspot.com, Pepakura Designer at tamasoft.co.jp/pepakura/en, and Implementation at nickm.com/implementation/.

"They shouldn't have lied at the border."

WHEN THE OTTAWA BAND THE GREY TRIED TO CROSS THE BORDER TO PLAY A SHOW, THEY GOT STOPPED—NOW THEY CAN'T ENTER THE US FOR FIVE YEARS

The Grey, an Ottawa, Ontario quartet, is planning to tour Canada, Europe and Japan in support of its new album *Asleep at the Wheel*. But don't look for them to play any shows in the states—a US Border Control Agent banned them from entering America for five years.

According to a letter from the Department of Homeland Security, the band was singled out for inspection at the border on February 12, 2005, "based upon their nervous behavior." The band *was* feeling a little nervous.

"It was a last-minute thing to come play this show

some demos. And then I asked Jeanine and Caroline to come over and listen to them, along with the other guys. Nobody knew each other so I had a meet-and-greet party.

O'Toole: We really liked what we heard and told him that we'd keep listening to the demos and come back a week later with some ideas.

Murphy: And a week later, we went over there and sang.

Wait, you just sang for him a cappella?

Anderson: No, it was along with the demos. I mean they had the headphones and we just sat there and listened. We put them on the spot to see if they are fearless. And they were totally fearless.

Murphy: It was really intimidating.

And you ladies had never played in a rock band before right?

Murphy: No. Jeanine and I had sung in chorus and been in high school musicals together.

Do you remember any of the musicals you guys did?

O'Toole: I remember them all. We did this one *The Boyfriend* that we were pretty obsessed with. We did *Bye-Bye Birdie* and *Carousel* and I did a little *Hello Dolly* on the side at community theatre.

in Ogdensburg, New York," explains drummer Hayden Menzies, "we knew we were probably not going to get paid." The musicians said they were attending, but not performing at, the show.

"We've all toured the States before in different bands," adds guitarist Chuck Sasso, "both with visas and without. Usually if you just say that you have a recording contract with an American company, there's no problems." In fact, the Grey had just signed a deal with Lovitt Records.

"I got an e-mail the day after the border incident," says Lovitt's Brian Lowitt, "and my first reaction was, 'Did they find anything on you?'"

The border guards did find something on the band—not

drugs or weapons but 30 copies of their EP. After learning that they were playing, not attending, a show, the border guards questioned the Grey for six hours. After collecting mug shots and fingerprints, the border agent in charge banned the musicians from entering the United States for five years. Attending weddings, funerals, or making international flights that stop in a US airport are all forbidden.

"The supervising officer told me that they could have detained me longer since I did most of the talking," says Menzies, "and because the van was registered in my name they could have detained that and everything inside, including merch and equipment."

"They shouldn't have lied at the border," clucked Cher-

How many shows did you guys play before the EP came out?

O'Toole: We finished the EP and then we played our first show.

Anderson: Before we played in Chicago, we wanted everything to be figured out. We didn't want to go through the motions. When we got onstage for the first time, we wanted it to be a completed idea.

Is the first song on the EP, "Bring the Good Boys Home" an anti-war song of some kind?

Anderson: I really appreciate it when artists can respond to a particular event or topic, but my approach is to take things and maybe hide the meaning in the words. That song is a kind of take-off on this funk song from the 1970s "Bring the Boys Home" which was a really specific reaction to the Vietnam War and we kind of . . .

O'Toole: . . . Turned it into this selfish plea from a woman's point of view, about her sexuality, wishing her man would come home, too.

Anderson: We have a new song we're working on called, "The Will in Firm Fashion." I was watching Bush's State of the Union speech and he used that line, "We have to keep the will in the firm fashion," and I was like that's really hot. For me, writing lyrics is a collage of different ideas. Like our music. —Joe Meno

You don't need a time machine to check out the 1990's for yourself: myspace.com/1990s.

ise Miles, spokesperson for US Customs and Border Patrol.

Miles noted that foreign citizens must hold valid P-3 visas in order to perform lawfully.

"Let's say that they are going to attend a Battle of the Bands in America where they won't be paid, they just want the exposure," Miles explained, "If the promoter charges admission, even though the band doesn't see a dime, they need the visas." Free shows that allow bands to sell merch also require visas.

Miles confirmed that a five-year ban is standard—if any of the Grey attempt to cross the border again, the sentence automatically increases to 10 years.

"A lot of bands don't even stay together five years," noted Brian Lowitt who is standing

by the band, despite the fact that they are unable to promote *Asleep at the Wheel* in the states.

"It's tough," Lowitt admits, "A lot of publications won't review bands unless they are playing locally." US sales have been sluggish and the band has lost income they could have earned from playing shows.

One music business insider said that many bands try to bypass border hassles entirely. "They rent a motel room at the border, store their equipment and merch, cross the border, play a show with borrowed equipment, then return to get their stuff and finish the tour." The insider went on to note that this kind of hassle with borders and visas is particular to North America. "Europe doesn't care

Iceberg Town BY JOE MENO AND NICK BUTCHER

After the sad results of the most recent election, many of us fled north. But the great continent could not bear the immense strain; a unnoticed yet glacier-sized city drifted off into the ocean and the small strange world of Iceberg Town was born then.



Our birthday had been ruined by the President of the United States: our records were stolen as well as our dear friend Spits the deer and we think the President may have even put fanged spiders in the chocolate cake.



From the tower of his terrible submarine, the President shot his rifle in the air, laughing, as he made his speedy escape.



Elise looked away and began to cry: her tears made a beautiful little zoo of ice animals at our feet. "Why doesn't someone do something?" she asked.

who plays where, Japan doesn't care," he says. "In England it's the responsibility of the venue, not the band, to make sure the paperwork is in place."

Brian Lowitt believes that the band made a mistake when they didn't tell the truth at the border but that the punishment far outweighs the crime. Lowitt's congressman attempted to intervene with the Department of Homeland Security while Lowitt petitioned the Canadian Embassy, all to no avail.

"With NAFTA they're always talking about sharing stuff," Lowitt says. "But they can't let artists across the border to play music?" —Andrew Reynolds

Check out the Grey at: thegreymusic.com.

"We were doing political comics that no one was willing to publish."

FOR OVER TWO DECADES, WORLD WAR 3 ILLUSTRATED HAS DRAWN A LINE IN THE SAND IN THE WORLD OF COMICS

Founded in 1980 by Seth Tobocman and Peter Kuper, *World War 3 Illustrated* is a publication devoted to political comics, graphics, and stories run by a collective of artists out of New York. Having recently reached their 25-year anniversary, the annual magazine celebrated with a panel at this summer's fifth-annual MoCCA Arts Festival at the Museum of Comic and Cartoon Art in New York.

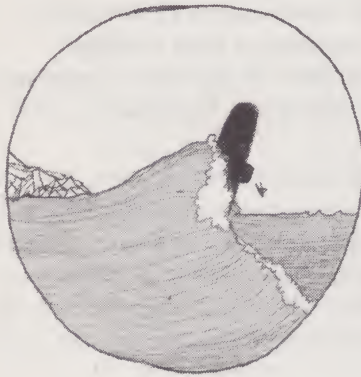
"We were facing the life-threatening situation of

Ronald Reagan in the White House," Peter Kuper tells *Punk Planet* about starting the publication, partially inspired by the ephemeral nature of most political graphics work. "We were doing political comics that no one was willing to publish. We were seeing other people's artwork on walls and lampposts that was great, but washed away in a hard rain."

Cofounder Seth Tobocman echoes Kuper's frustration over the dire political situation out of which the

magazine arose. The magazine was a "response to the hysterical right-wing atmosphere that surrounded the Iran-Hostage crisis," Tobocman describes. "Americans were sporting big buttons that said 'FUCK IRAN' and buying dartboards with the face of the Ayatollah Khomeini. We felt that the US was going in the wrong direction and we had a vague notion that it was our role to oppose this through our art."

Kuper, Tobocman, and a rotating editorial board (eventually including Sabrina Jones, Eric Drooker, Susan Wilmarth, Christopher Cardinale, and many others) felt the publication was important because, as Kuper describes it, "A lot of our experiences were not being covered in the mainstream media."



It was a very good question: before I could answer, an awful tumult of foamy white waves upended the tiny black submarine.



Just then an enormous squid crushed the hull of the submarine, tearing the president into pieces with its deadly beak.



While the submarine sank, Spots swam safely through the icy water. Elise put her jacket around him and said, "I'm very sorry. We're the ones that let this happen, not the President."

The magazine's covered a range of hard-core political topics throughout its entire run—what's known as red-meat politics—including the Iran-Contra affair, the Tompkins Square Riot, the recent invasion of Iraq, the first Gulf War, genocide in Bosnia, September 11, and the corruption of the current administration. (The current issue features a Steve Brodner piece on Abu Ghraib, a satirical Tom Tomorrow strip on the state of the Supreme Court, and a Sabrina Jones travelogue from Jerusalem.) Yet the magazine doesn't shy away from more personal and cultural issues either, occasionally giving over its pages to issues of racial, sexual, and religious identities as well as "dreams and nightmares both real and imagined," as their

own press materials state.

WW3 Illustrated is unique among comics publications because it values content over style and formal training, focusing on lending a home to voices or issues of the underrepresented: it receives occasional criticism for favoring the message over the medium—but, contributors say, at least the message is getting out. Plus, such a focus on the "ends" (as opposed to "the means") opens up the publication to a group more diverse than that found in the average art magazine. Contributors occasionally include academics, activists, and visual artists and illustrators as well as respected, long-time comics creators.

"*WW3 Illustrated* was set up as a place where we could experiment with comics, an art form that was just waking up to its

own potential," Tobocman says. "A place where radical voices could be free to speak."

It's definitely a labor of love: profits are all put back into the continuation of the magazine, minus printing and distribution, and magazine editors and contributors, according to *WW3 Illustrated*'s press materials, "all receive the same pay—a magazine they've helped build."

"The concept of self-publishing wasn't brand new," Kuper explains. He and Tobocman "had published a couple of zines (in Cleveland where we both grew up) starting when we were 11 years old."

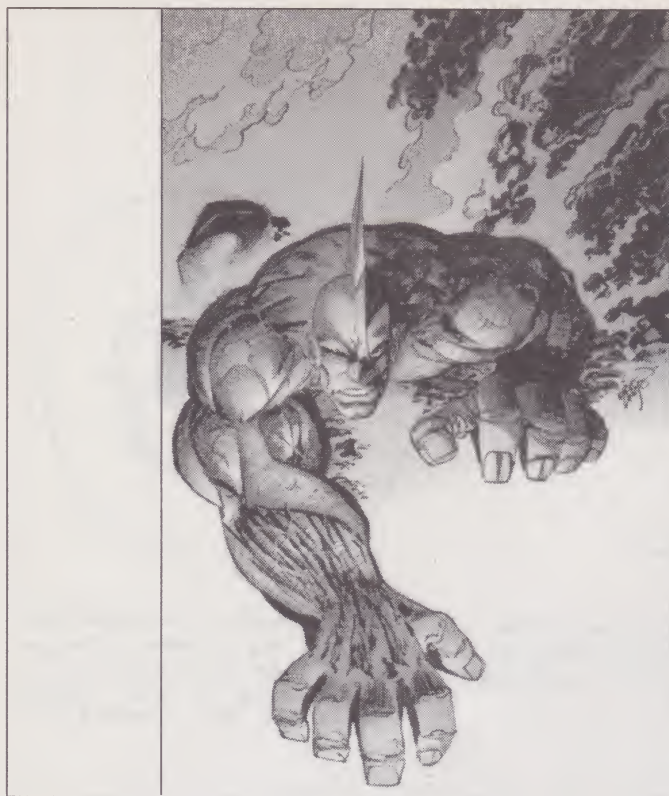
When asked why—and how—the magazine can keep going, Kuper is clear that the political situation he's been describing hasn't really changed. "All of the above mi-

nus Ronald Reagan, but plus George W Bush, which is a major minus," he says.

Yet Kuper was more relaxed in describing the situation a few weeks ago on the MoCCA Arts Festival panel. "We're just compelled to do comics regardless of what that translated into as a career move . . . The magazine as an entity has been giving back to us in all these quiet ways," he says. A recent surge of interest in comics by the mainstream publishing book market has only helped, of course, but Kuper acknowledges that even if that hadn't brought in both attention and money for several of the magazine's contributors, "we'd still be doing them."

—Anne Elizabeth Moore

Check WorldWar3Illustrated.org to find out more.



“A 125-issue run on any title, much less a title not published by the ‘big two,’ is an achievement.”

WHEN HE FIRST BROKE AWAY FROM CORPORATE PUBLISHERS, SAVAGE DRAGON'S ERIK LARSEN COULDN'T HAVE PREDICTED HIS SCALED SUPERHERO WOULD STILL BE GOING STRONG 14 YEARS LATER

First released to widespread audiences in 1992, *The Savage Dragon* three-issue miniseries was soon thereafter turned into a regular comic-book series from Erik Larsen. Recently, *The Savage Dragon* achieved its milestone 125th issue. The 14-year-plus tenure of Larsen as the writer/artist of the current series is the second longest in comicdom, surpassed only by Dave Sim's 300-issue run on *Cerebus*.

The story chronicles the adventures of a hulking, green powerhouse with a mohawk-like head-fin named the Dragon. An early version of the Dragon was originally conceived by Larsen as a child in elementary school and appeared in a self-published fanzine called *Graphic Fantasy*.

Ken Brown, owner of Glendale, Arizona's comic shop Drawn to Comics says, “A 125-issue run on any title, much less a title not

“I wanna grow plants now. I'm a fan of change.”

EX-LUNACHICKS FRONTWOMAN THEO KOGAN CHANGES THINGS UP WITH HER NEW BAND, THEO AND THE SKYSCRAPERS.

Theo Kogan is one of the most prolific, yet relatively unknown, female artists in the biz today. Kogan is best known for fronting the all-female punk group, Lunachicks, for more than a decade. Since their last release, *Luxury Problem*, in 1999, she took a break from the band to focus on a solo project, modeling, acting, spinning records at clubs, and staying fresh in the New York City social circuit. Now she's back to her old stomping grounds, setting the record straight about the fate of Lunachicks, and fronting and touring cross-country with new outfit, Theo and the Skyscrapers.

With this band, did you go into the studio knowing what you wanted to sound like or what direction you wanted to go in?

Not exactly. Nothing's ever been like an actual decision. It's been a sort of a progression that's been organic. I don't see why I would start another band and have it be exactly the same. People are starting to say, “Well, I really like the Lunachicks, why don't you do stuff like that?” To me, it's like, then I wouldn't be growing. To make a sort of parallel, like if you were working at

a job for 15 years, let's say, and everyone got used to you working at that job and then you got a promotion, or from a librarian you became a horticulturist or something, and everyone is like, “But I liked you as a librarian . . .” but, like I wanna grow plants now. I'm a fan of change.

What's inspiring your writing?

The lyrics are very personal, actually, and inspired from stuff that I've gone through or am going through or, you know, childhood. I think about people in the middle of nowhere, gay kids in the middle of nowhere. In a lot of what I'm writing, I want to help people feel like they're not by themselves and that they can get out of where they are and be safe.

Tell me about the transition from

Lunachicks to this band.

I was doing a lot of acting and modeling and then during that time me and Sean [Pierce] were writing stuff and so we just said, “Why don't we make this totally different album.” There was a long time that I couldn't face starting a new relationship like that 'cause I come from Lunachicks where we're super-close friends. We had grown up together and it was like a family. Then enough time passed and I was ready to do it.

How did you get the other band members involved?

We decided that we wanted everyone to be tall, so we found a drummer who was really tall, and we immediately played with him and it was great. That guy quit to join Amen and his best friend Chris is our drummer

published by the 'big two,' is an achievement that should bring him honor and respectability by current and future creators for years to come."

Like Sim's *Cerebus* and Larsen's other creations—*Freak Force*, *Star*, *Deadly Duo*, and *The Superpatriot*—all of the characters and situations in *The Savage Dragon* are creator-owned, which means as creator of the series, Larsen has complete control over the direction the series takes.

Larsen left Marvel Comics nearly 15 years ago in order to establish the independent Image Comics along with six other colleagues to escape editorial interference over his work. Although his ventures with Image Comics continue to be successful, Larsen has occasionally returned to Marvel Comics and the other half of the comics industry "big two," DC Comics, as a writer or artist (or both). His main focus, however, is still his most successful creation, the Dragon.

Larsen's work came to prominence during the same period that the darker styles of Todd McFarlane's *Spider-Man*, Rob Liefeld's *New Mutants*, and Jim Lee's *Uncanny X-Men* were popular.

While his contemporaries continued to move in their own artistic directions, Larsen managed to incorporate the new, gritty look of comics with the classic Marvel house style of the 1960s pioneered by Jack Kirby. Larsen's designs were a cross between Kirby's style and the then-emerging McFarlane-type style.

Larsen draws much of his style and influence from Kirby

(the original *X-Men* and *The Fantastic Four*), along with other industry legends Gil Kane (*The Incredible Hulk*, *Green Lantern*) Walter Simonson (*The Mighty Thor*), and Frank Miller (*Sin City* and *The Dark Knight Returns*).

His rendition of Spider-Man, contorted in an impossible position, superimposed over the omnipresent face of Dr Doom on the cover of his final full issue as penciler of *The Amazing Spider-Man* (#350) is typical of his cartoony, but a bit scary, Larsenesque style.

Today, Larsen is the publisher of Image Comics. He recently completed a eight-month hiatus from *The Savage Dragon* to focus on his publishing duties. He returned to his series with issue #122, quickly selling out the first printing of that and subsequent issues.

When Larsen and the other Image founders left the Marvel roster, those who were Marvel and DC loyalists, uninterested in the new imprint and characters associated with it, can now see the significance of the transition.

But hindsight is 20/20, and hopefully we recognize that Larsen and associates' decision to focus on their own creations rather than building on company-owned charters was an important, successful, liberating decision for comics, as the long, long run of *The Savage Dragon* proves. —David Carlson

Tame The Savage Dragon at Imagecomics.com.

now. Then we asked this girl to play bass and she was into it so we didn't have a ton of auditions. We were really lucky. You know, like with Lunachicks changing drummers, we had some flakey auditions with people where it's all holding in hysterical laughter or like, people really into it . . .

How many drummers auditioned for Lunachicks?

Many . . . the most infamous one was this one woman who

was a prosecutor. So in the first audition, she goes, "Yeah, I really love my job as a prosecutor," but half of us heard prostitute.

Are Lunachicks broken up or just taking an extended break?

Yeah, we're broken up but we're leaving it open. The reason is because if we do decide to play again . . . I think we all kind of collectively feel that we hate the "reunion." —Rebecca McKillup

Read reviews, participate in contests, and check out photos of the band online at theoandtheskyscrapers.com.

"It's not about man-hating or female superiority, and it's not about just women."

BITCH MAGAZINE CELEBRATES ITS 10TH YEAR

In 1996, amid the publication of *Bridget Jones's Diary*, the selling (out?) of *Ms. Maga-*

zine to MacDonald Communications, and the growth of the dubious "post-feminist"

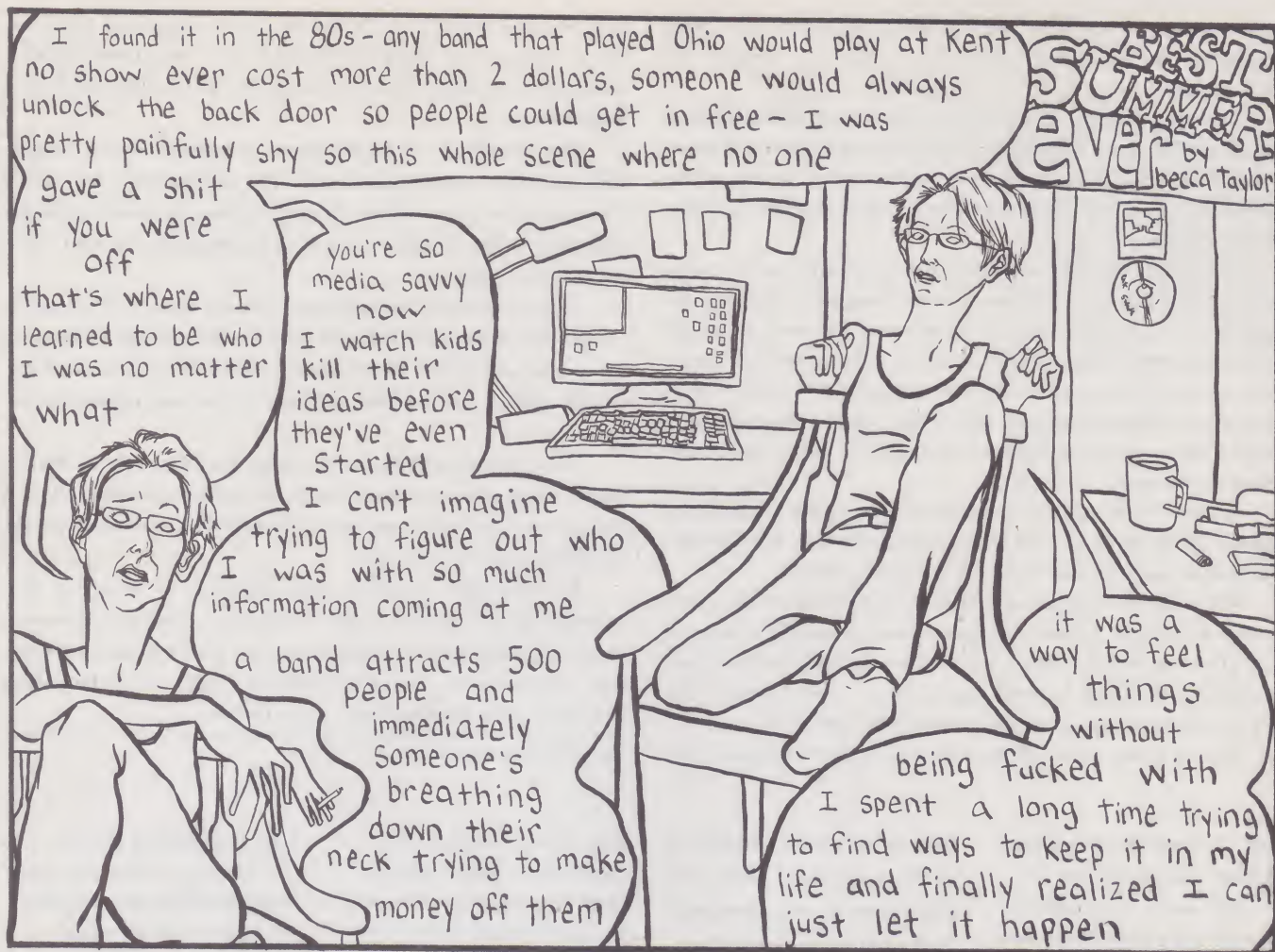
and "third-wave feminist" movements, *Bitch* magazine came roaring onto the women-based-media scene. The budding zine's mission statement: to be "a fresh, revitalizing voice for feminism, one that welcomes complex arguments and refuses to ignore the contradictory and sometimes uncomfortable details that constitute the realities of women's lives."

Now celebrating its 10th anniversary, *Bitch* isn't backing down. (With a name like *Bitch*, it sort of can't.) In fact since its birth as a zine, *Bitch* has steadily grown to a circulation of 48,000 and is now distributed across the United States, in Canada, and in a sprinkling of other regions where Borders, Barnes and Noble, and Tower Records

have staked their claims.

How does a feminist zine based around critical essays—not fashion, news, or politics—receive such attention in a magazine world where both feminism and critical essays are rarities? Part of the appeal may be *Bitch's* take on feminism; you won't find any analogies to fish and bicycles on these pages.

"Our conception of feminism is that it's not about man-hating or female superiority, and it's not about just women," said Andi Zeisler, *Bitch's* co-founder and editorial director. "It's about understanding that our culture really is set up as an antagonism between both men and women as well as between women and 'feminism,' and that it's important to look at



cultural products with that in mind."

Bitch focuses on the ways pop culture uses and depicts gender (though ironically, the folks at Barnes & Noble have nestled it among "Women's Interest" faves like *Glamour* and *Cosmopolitan*). Recent topics have included a look at the style tactics of Dolly Parton and Madonna, an analysis of NBC's *The Biggest Loser*, and a piece on male-to-female transsexuals in competitive sports.

As the counterweight to its Women's-Interest-shelf cohorts, *Bitch* is unabashedly not about finding the right jeans

for your figure, or even the top-10 sex toys that will light his eyes on fire. "Our focus on pop culture brings with it an anti-consumerist stance," said Lisa Jarvis, *Bitch*'s other co-founder. "Who's pushing this message and what are they trying to sell by doing so?"

Yet despite its bordering-on-anticapitalist perspective, *Bitch* is definitely not anti-tangibility. The magazine was born at a time when Internet-based publications were accelerating and the rumor of a print apocalypse was spreading fast. But Jarvis and Zeisler shared a love of

holding, smelling, and saving magazines, not to mention bringing them into the bathroom—stuff not easy to do with digital publications. Both also point out that its print form expands *Bitch*'s accessibility for the many people who don't have the Internet. Plus, you won't stand a chance of reaching the *Bitch* website from a computer, school library, or (probably) home if you're a 12-year-old girl.

"Back when we started, people would often see our website before the print zine and say something like, 'Hey, why did you decide to do a print

zine in addition to a website?'" Zeisler said. "That was always amusing to us because we always prioritized print and never really believed all the talk about how the Internet was going to make magazines obsolete."

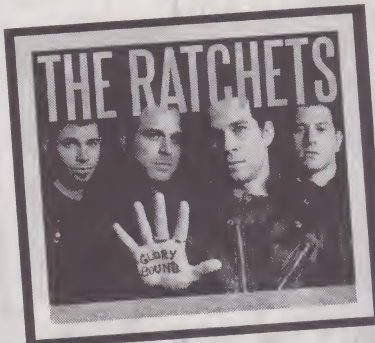
More evidence that *Bitch* won't be abandoning its print medium anytime soon: in celebration of its anniversary, Jarvis and Zeisler have put together an anthology entitled *BitchFest: Ten Years of Cultural Criticism from the Pages of Bitch*. The book hits stores in August.

—Maya Schenwar ©

Check Bitchmagazine.com, or get the book when it comes out from Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

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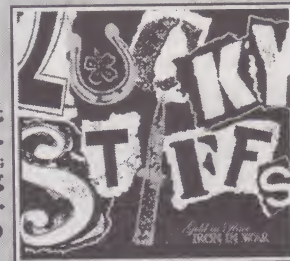


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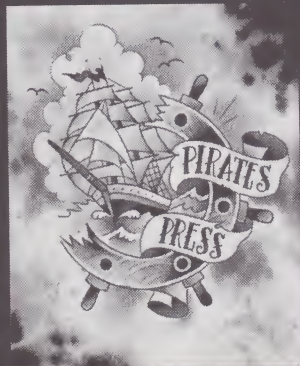
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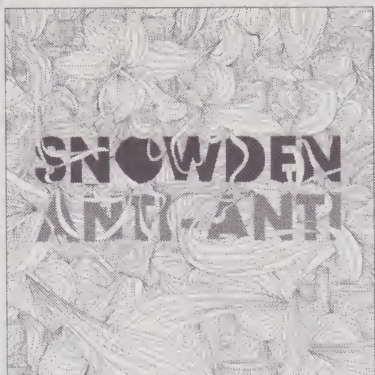
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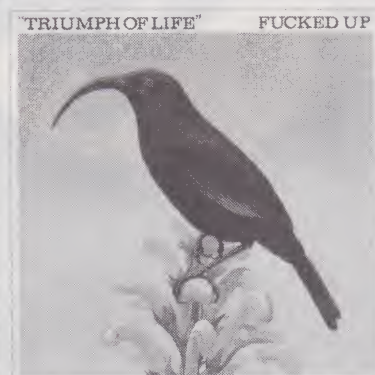
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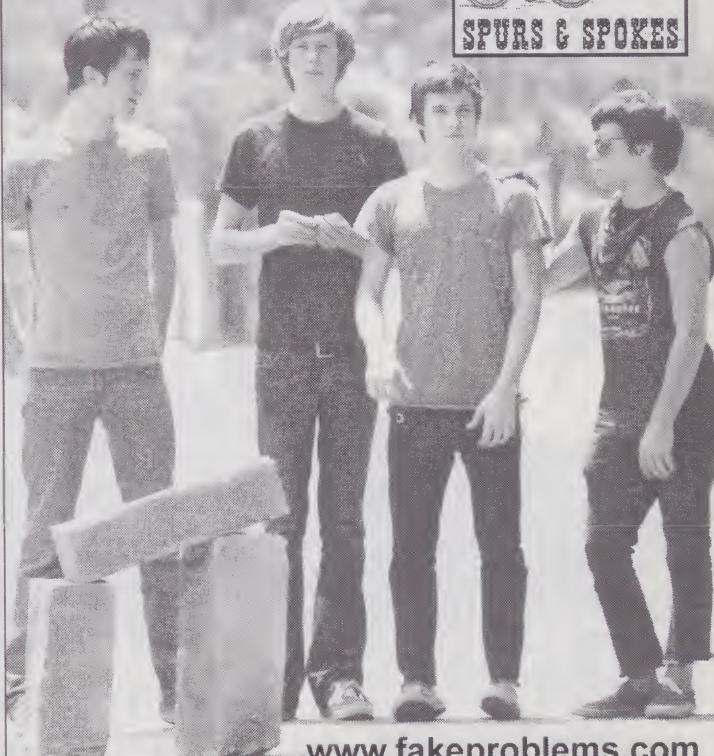
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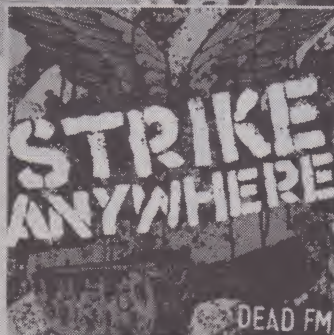
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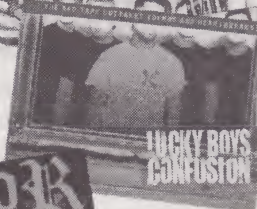
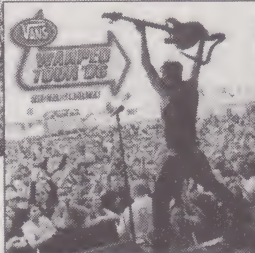
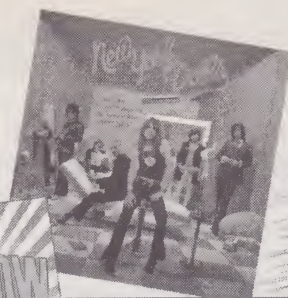
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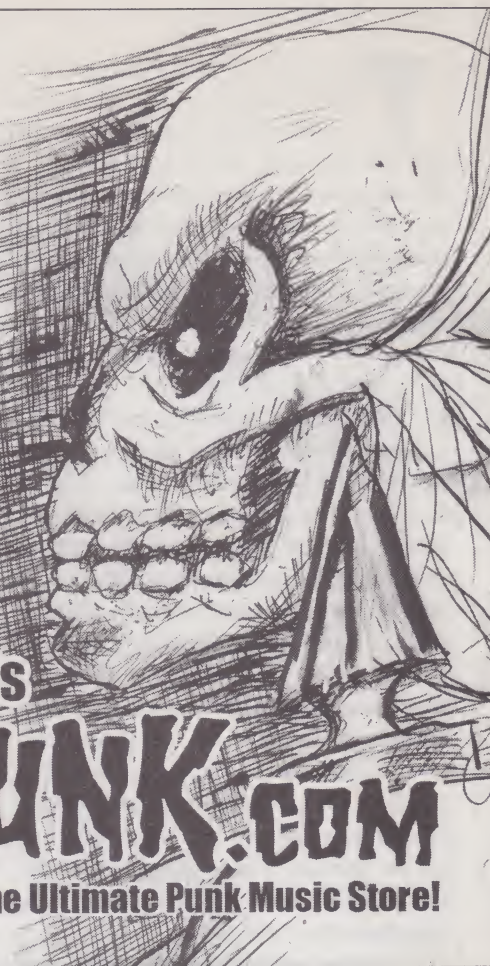




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The very first time I met Harvey Pekar, he and his wife (and sometime collaborator) Joyce Brabner were on tour with *Our Cancer Year* in the mid-1990s. I was totally taken then by his devotion to making comics be something most people did not think they were capable of becoming: a literary form. I didn't think, "Sheesh, that guy's a curmudgeon!" Nor did I think, "Now there's a cheap bastard." I thought, "Wow, it's too bad that's not, like, a job."

I had just barely begun to write about comics and the idea that there could be a whole wealth of graphic tales by a variety of artists on a wide range of subjects and in a plethora of styles available in all sections of bookstores across the US was unthinkable. Yet, 12-ish years later, Pekar's demands that we accept comics as literature began to result in just this, and created just such a job—a job I was offered and accepted (provided it didn't impede on my *Punk Planet* work) around a year ago: series editor for an annual comics anthology in a respected literary line. It only made sense, then, to invite Pekar to guest edit the first volume with me, and he graciously accepted. (This book—*The Best American Comics 2006*—will appear from Houghton Mifflin in the fall).

In reading work for this volume (and it is my mandate to read all comics produced during the time period each book covers) Pekar's pervasive influence on contemporary comics was evident. Although a fan from a young age—his engagement with the form when comic books were limited exclusively to superheroes—Pekar quickly became disenchanted with the medium and gave it up at age 11. As he said on a panel at the Book Expo America in May, "I thought there was something intrinsically limited about comics . . . if they could do everything they could do, why is it just guys in tights pounding on each other?"

But it hasn't been just guys in tights pounding on each other for a while now. In 1972, motivated by recent developments in underground comics, Pekar and his pal R Crumb published their first story together, fulfilling the writer's stated desire to bring realism to the form with his introspective, autobiographical stories of everyday life. He'd been writing jazz criticism for years but soon turned the majority of his attention to the comics industry. In 1976, he started self-publishing *American Splendor*. This he kept up for 14 years, to growing acclaim, until the schedule and conditions of self-publishing in the Midwest proved too

grueling to keep up with during his treatment for prostate cancer. Since, he's worked with a variety of publishers in both the comics and mainstream book industries—with time-outs for regular rabbling-rousing appearances on *Late Night with David Letterman* and for big-screen superstardom.

None of which has he let go to his head. In fact, the first time I spoke with Harvey Pekar on the phone in the summer of 2005, I told him that we had met earlier. He was attending an upcoming comics convention, and I had planned to go and re-introduce myself. "Well, I've gotten a little older since then," he warned me. "You might not recognize me."

I paused, and then replied, "OK. I'll keep that in mind." But I was *thinking*: "Yeah, there was also that really popular and well-received major motion picture about your life that you were also *in*."

This was my first introduction to the vast chasm of difference between Harvey Pekar the Character and Harvey Pekar the Man. One is a stereotypical curmudgeonly grouch, an over-amplification of the frustrations felt by anyone with thin skin set to comic timing. The other, however, is an introspective, thoughtful historian, concerned about the state of the world and deeply invested in the feelings of others.

It becomes clear when spending time with him that Pekar the Character is an invention of Pekar the Man. The device is made tangible in the 2003 film *American Splendor*, based on the long-running publication as well as Pekar and Brabner's cancer memoir. In the movie, Paul Giametti plays Pekar the Character; Harvey Pekar plays the Man himself. The split comes closest to truly blowing the mind when viewed with director's commentary, wherein Pekar and Giametti—and the director and casting director, as well as Brabner and several other characters and the actors who play them—watch and comment on the film, conversing among themselves about it, about their mutual history, and about the actual history the film represents. Pekar's commentary is issued forth on any topic from the jazz music chosen for the film to hometown shooting locales. He is in his element, an expert on both the realism and mythology of his own life. Until his cell phone rings—he's forgotten to turn it off for the taping—and he has a brief conversation with the caller. On the commentary track of an Academy Award-nominated film.

It's a quintessential Harvey Pekar moment. He's simultaneously distracted by the portrayal

of himself on the screen, the ongoing conversation in which he is compelled to participate, and the sudden outburst of technology. He's not impressed by the success of the film—I mean, it's OK, but he's not going to fundamentally change because of it. And he's got work to do. It's an extremely revealing moment, because watching it, you see: the man who's put so much effort into portraying himself as a cheapskate and a crank—although he'll blame this on Giametti's portrayal if you let him—is actually *really nice*.

That's the reality of it: that's Harvey Pekar the Man. He and his mythological creation, Harvey Pekar the Character, have both for better and for worse ranked among the most influential forces in comics for three decades. Elements of almost everything we discuss below, from the current book-market boom to the plethora of not-so-good autobio comics, can be traced back to his tireless efforts to forward comics as literature.

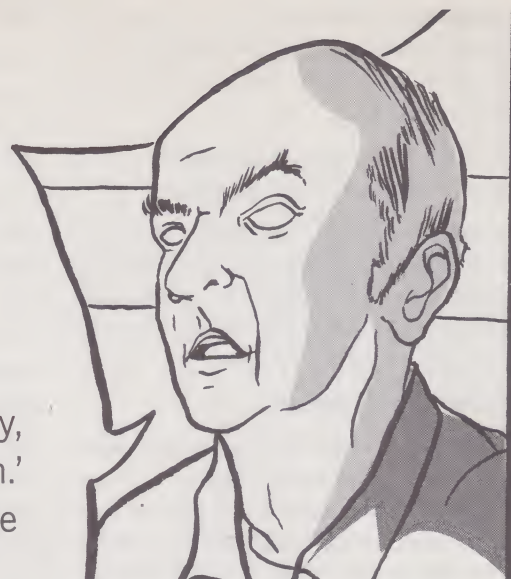
After working with him closely by telephone and through the mail for 10 months, I had the chance to interview Harvey Pekar in Chicago over the course of a weekend in June. We conducted two separate interviews, combined into the following. The first, which makes up the bulk of this piece, was conducted in private, following a pie reception we'd thrown at PPHQ in his honor. Pekar and I spoke in a small room, with a tape recorder and a few of his books piled in front of us. The second interview was public and conducted in a crowded bar in the Financial District as a part of the Other Book Festival.

The interview is accompanied by a rare Harvey Pekar original storyboard, with an interpretation by *Punk Planet*'s own Becca Taylor. The pieces go a long way toward showing Pekar's artistic process: the stick-figure art is representative of what he sends along to the illustrators he works with, and this is followed up by a phone call in which he describes various comic elaborations. ("You could have me pigging out on a bunch of pies," he told Taylor.)

Combined, this all serves as an intimate portrait of an important figure, and I have been grateful for the access as well as the friendship. It has brought me great pleasure to work with both Harvey Pekar the Man and Harvey Pekar the Character, on this interview and elsewhere. The latter has been endlessly entertaining, the former a staunch defender of independent thought and action, and both have been a true joy to work alongside.

Interview by Anne Elizabeth Moore

"I think that people look at comics . . . and they say, 'What can be done with this medium? It's a kids medium.' As a result, a lot of good writers and illustrators have decided to not use comics at all, which is a shame."



HARVEY PEKAR

So, Harvey: the 30-year anniversary of *American Splendor* is this year.

I guess so, yeah. 1976 to 2006. You know, you stay on something, and after awhile it adds up. Next thing you know, you got 30 years. I was on my job for 37, with the federal government.

You were 34 when you put out the first issue?

Let's see, I was born in 1939. So, yeah, I guess I was 34. I started doing comics in 1972 and that was because of Crumb. You know, he was a friend of mine. I had read comics voraciously when I was a kid, and I got sick of them. They were boring. They were formulaic. I caught on to that earlier than most kids do. Some people never do.

How old were you?

I was about 11 when I just—I just said no. I'm not spending my money on this shit anymore. I'm gonna read novels. So that's what I did.

You've been fairly critical of superhero comics in the past—beyond them being boring, or formulaic.

It's just kids stuff, just about all of it is. I think that people look at comics and they see the most important people in comics, or the ones that they know, are these superheroes. And they say, "What can be done with this medium? It's a kids medium." As a result, a lot of good writers and illustrators have decided to not use comics at all, which is a shame. Because the more peo-

ple who do comics, the better comics will get, and the more talented people they'll attract.

Do you remember reading anything before meeting Crumb that inspired you to strive toward expanding the potential of comics?

Mad magazine didn't inspire me to do that, but lookin' at it, you know, he was going in that direction. Harvey Kurtzman was opening things up. He certainly deserves credit for that. I look at him as a major influence on underground comics. Actually, that was about the only comic book that I stayed in touch with during my teenage years. [He] really laid the foundation for alternative comics. For one thing he introduced satire into comics . . . comics used to be kind of a dull medium, the way most people used them. His writing was more sophisticated.

Jumping ahead to your own comic, do you remember getting that first issue of *American Splendor* back from the printers?

Yeah. I was thrilled. See, I had big ambitions. I thought, comic books can be used for *anything*. They can be as good as any other art form. And nobody sees that but me, apparently. Or virtually nobody. I'm not a—you know, [I thought,] "I can't draw. But I can write. Maybe I can get into this stuff. If I do, I'll be an innovator. And innovators, they get credit anyway for making breakthroughs. I'll have a place in history." So when the comic book came out, I was thrilled. It was the first step.

¶ I had had some stuff published before that, that Crumb and other people had illustrated, but this was the big step. This was my thing, you know? I wrote it all, I edited it. Everything.

You were publishing it yourself too, until 1990.

Yeah, until 1990, when I had cancer. And when I had cancer, I had a comic book that was ready to go. The stories had been done, but I was getting chemotherapy treatments, so I was real weak. There was a lot of physical work involved in getting a comic book out. You had to drag around boxes all over the city and stuff like that.

You were distributing it throughout the city?

No, I was involved in the printing process. I had to bring the art work down to a guy who shot the negatives, then the guy who shot the negatives would send them out to a printer—one printer for the cover, which was in color, the other printer for the black-and-white stuff, then get the bindery involved in putting this stuff together and trimming it. And they'd let me know when they were done and I'd have to go and pick up 50 boxes of comics and store them, and start making orders for them and carrying them down to the post office.

Was there no full-service printer in town or were you trying to save money?

There was no full-service place. In Cleveland, believe it or not, there was no printer that I came across that had all the services I needed. This is a primitive town.

Fourteen years, under those conditions, is a pretty long time to be self publishing.

It wasn't like anybody was gonna do it for me. I was making more money doing comics this way, because I could take them to shows and sell them to people, getting them at wholesale rates and selling them for retail.

Do you miss self publishing?

No, it was too much of a hassle. Because when I got well, I looked around to see if I could get anybody to publish this stuff. So I got these guys from Tundra, you know that *Ninja Turtle* thing? [The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles' Kevin Eastman and Peter Laird—ed.] I checked with them. I heard they were willing to do good deeds for other comic-book artists, and they were rolling in dough. They went with the idea, and they published an issue. Then they folded. I thought, maybe I've got enough prestige out there that I can get a real publisher, or at least another publisher who'll last more than a year, to publish it. So I started working for Dark Horse, but they didn't want to publicize it. I found out later, they didn't even bother to print up enough issues that I could possibly make a profit on the book. Because when the movie came out, everybody wanted the comic books, and Dark Horse sold out of them. I asked them, "Why didn't I get a royalty check?" I wound up about breaking even. ¶ When the movie came out, Doubleday wanted to put out a companion volume of *American Splendor*. It sold real well. So I asked Random House if they would print more of my stuff, so they gave me a four-book contract. And there was this guy named Dean Haspiel. See, Dean had hooked me up with Ted Hope—

—of Good Machine, the company that created the film?

Yeah. He hooked me up with them, so I felt like I owed him something. So I said, what can I do, within reason, that'll pay you back for doing me that good dead on *American Splendor*. And he said, "Why don't you write a long piece"—he had done some illustration for me, but not much—"Why don't you write a long piece that I can illustrate?" It turned out he could make a lot of money that way if he got it accepted by DC because they pay \$300 per page for penciling and inking. So he wound up doing a 100-page book and making \$30,000. Not too bad. At

least now he can't lay a guilt trip on me.

Besides Tundra, in the last 30 years you've seen plenty of publishers, not to mention most of the distributors you've probably worked with, go under.

I've seen a lot of opportunities missed. The comic-book industry has itself to blame. I think that the problem they made over distribution which still today hasn't been satisfactorily settled, is gonna cause them problems.

You mean allowing Diamond to be the only comics distributor?

Yeah, yeah. Allowing [Steve] Geppi [owner of Diamond Comics Distribution] to have a monopoly. That really hurts alternative and underground comics, because he won't mess with them. [It used to be that] the big comic-book companies—Marvel and DC—were actually distributed by a variety of companies, and began going exclusively with one distributor. Consequently, the alternative comics distributors went under because they lost the income they were getting from Marvel and DC. As a result, alternative comics in the late '70s were in really bad shape. I'm not going to say they were going to die, because comics are I think too good a form to die. I don't see how the current situation, where I think Diamond distributors has a monopoly—I don't see how that's legally permissible. At least, it seems like a monopoly to me, but apparently the courts think otherwise.

How do these distribution issues affect you personally, as follower of comics?

I thought—people used to send me comics in the mail, and I was getting less and less of them in the 1990s. I thought people were just giving up on them, that there was nothing new out there that was any good. Then I went down to the Small Press Expo in Bethesda, MD just this last year and these kids would come by and hand me their comics, and I filled up a box full of 'em. I took them home and read them, and there was some good stuff in there. I thought, "God, this stuff's good. Why don't I know about this stuff?" It's because kids have terrific problems getting it published, and then if they self publish like I did, they can't get it distributed. And comics, partly as a result of that, have not grown or expanded as much as I'd like to see. Although there's been some growth. Hopefully someday alternative comics will catch on and they won't be considered alternative. They'll be the mainstream comics.

This problem of distribution is a common one. We've seen it at Punk Planet, where we've had some distribution problems due to being an independent magazine in a corporate-owned world. It all ends up being a part of the same problem of media consolidation that you were yelling at David Letterman about, specifically about GE's ownership of NBC, in 1988.

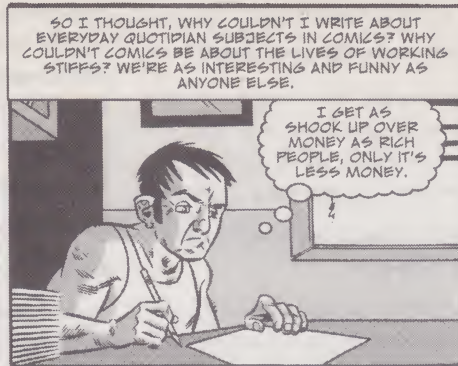
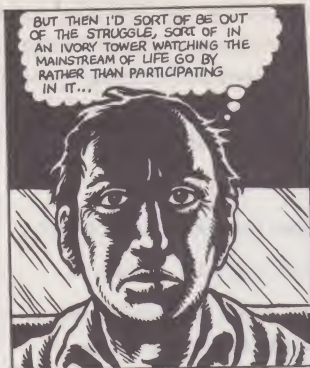
The first hassle we had was in 1987 and then we had another big hassle in '88.

What was the first one?

That was about GE. The second one, I brought up the GE issue again. The second one, not too many people talk about. The second one, he was doing the usual stupid interview with me, so I said, "Dave, why did you try and stop me from talking about GE, because when you did that you made yourself look like a shill for GE." So then we got into it, we had another big hassle.

You were upset because he wasn't speaking out against GE, or because you weren't allowed to speak out against GE?

I was mainly upset because I was getting nothing out of his show. I wasn't making any kind of money, I was getting the union minimum, my stuff wasn't selling. Apparently the people that watch his show don't read stuff like mine or don't know where to find it. So I did, you know, clown around and be funny. That's fine with me. But he always wanted me to do the same thing. The parody of the Cleveland working man. I wanted to do some other stuff. And he wouldn't let me do that either. All he wanted me to do was self-satire. So I had no reason to stay on the David Letterman show. ¶ I kept on telling Letterman about my dissatisfaction. Actually I was kinda popular for a while. I had been doing some reading about GE just buying NBC and I thought there was a conflict of interest there. That GE had no business owning a major media outlet like NBC because they had a history of being a corrupt corporation. ¶ The first time, [before the show started] I said, "Look, we're gonna talk about GE now." Letterman was hemming and hawing. He got one of his producers to come up with 10 subjects that we were going to talk about and GE was number five on the list. But we'd only cover, like, three subjects. He was just trying to pacify me, and at the end he would say, "Oh, we just ran out of time. You were so interesting on the other stuff, we just couldn't get to it." So I said, "Fuck it. I'm takin' over your show, now, man. Well, I'm just gonna talk about what I want to talk about, if you



"I've never had any drawing skills. All I can do are stick figures."

want to join in fine, if not I'll do a monologue. Or shout over you or something." And that's what I did. ¶ People think I was crazy to get Letterman mad, and stop having me on the show, but it's not enough for me just to be on TV. I want to do something. I want to do something creative or at least make some money.

Do you feel like those incidents created a greater awareness of media consolidation?

No. No, I think his fans were really ignorant. It didn't get any kind of media play at all.

Back to your comics: as I understand it, you block out your comics on the page before you send them to the artist. Did you ever want to draw more?

Yeah, but *I have no talent for it*. I used to draw for the hell of it, ever since I was a little kid. They'd make us take art classes in school, and I showed no aptitude for it. I figured, I'd better not mess around with this stuff, so I figured I would try and get an artist to illustrate my work. I put off seeking somebody else out, because I thought it would be impossible, because they'd never heard of me or anything. But then Crumb, who had been a friend of mine since 1962, he would come through Cleveland from California, and he would crash at my house. ¶ I did these stories when he came over in '72. I used to be sort of a class clown, I had these routines that I would do.

Like a stand-up comic?

Yeah. I liked to get laughs. So instead of telling 50 people the joke at one time, I would tell the same joke to 50 people and get 50 laughs. [Chuckles.] So I had these stories that were mostly made up from things that had happened to me, or things that I had done. So I said [to Crumb], look, man, just take a look at this and see if you think these things are viable. 'Cause I'd really like to start doing something. And he said, "Yeah, these are re-

ally good. I'd like to take them home with me and work on 'em."

What was the very first one he took home?

Well he took a batch of them home, but the first one he illustrated was a thing called "Crazy Ed" that was on the back cover of *People's Comics*, something that was published in 1972.

Did it give you the feeling that you had done something?

Yeah, it was nice. But it couldn't compare with, like, when the comic book came out.

And you've done how many books now?

Well, copies of *American Splendor*, I've done maybe 30 issues. I used to do an annual issue. And then collections have come out of my work, and what they call graphic novels, *The Quitter*, *Ego and Hubris*. There've been anthologies of my work in paperback that have come out. Probably over 35.

Have your drawing skills improved over the years?

No, I didn't want you to ask a question like that. I've never had any drawing skills. All I can do are stick figures. So when I'm signing autographs and someone asks me to do a drawing that's what you'll get—a stick figure. That's all I can do.

How do you choose the artists you want to work with?

Often I don't have a choice, depending on the assignment or job or whatever you want to call it. When I put out *Ego and Hubris* there was only one guy I knew who could possibly do it who would accept that kind of money and work that long, because it didn't pay a whole lot and I'm really grateful that he did. His name is Gary Dumm. I've been working with him since 1974. Mostly [I match up] the artist's style with the type of story I write. I write a lot of stories, some of them are pretty grim and some of them, I

hope, are funny. Every artist or illustrator has their own strengths and I try to give people stuff that brings out their strengths.

People are approaching you now more, instead of you seeking them out.

It's a first. I just used to strain for people to work with. When I started, Crumb did some stuff for me that was great—I paid him but not very much . . .

How much did you pay him?

Twenty-five bucks a page, I think later it went up. That's how much I was paying, I was losing money on the book.

You've worked with a fair number of female cartoonists over the years, more than I recalled from reading your work when I was a young fan years ago, but a lot of them aren't drawing comics anymore. Sue Cavey, who you worked with, comes to mind, and Julie Doucet, whose sense of realism has been compared to yours. Why do you think women haven't stuck around the field for very long?

I really don't know. For one thing, the comics audience has always been male. There were even less people years ago who did comics than do them now. I would imagine that women might be even more turned off by superhero comics than men, so they don't see any point in screwing around with the medium because they think it's really limited.

I have another question about the medium of comics. A lot of cartoonists seem to see a similarity between music and comics—although they're mostly referring to rock music, or punk. Do you see similarities?

I was a jazz critic, you know, for years before I drew comic books, and I don't see any big similarity between them. I mean, maybe people get the same free-spirit feeling from both of them or

something like that. And yeah, but that doesn't help me write a story.

What about the pacing? Do you ever try to pace your comics like a good jazz song?

Well, I try and pace my comics, but I'm influenced there strongly by stand-up comedians, people like Lenny Bruce. That has a strong influence on my pacing.

Do you have any favorite routines of Bruce's?

Yeah, the Palladium. That's one of his longest recorded works and it's about one of these foul-mouthed, Las Vegas-style comedians who's unhappy because he hasn't played the Palladium, he's just played the toilets, like in Las Vegas. He gets his manager to get him a gig at the Palladium and it turns out that the people who attend his performance are completely turned off by his routine. The thing ends with the guy freaking out, everything's in shambles. I've heard Bruce did a beautiful job in creating that scene.

I'm asking these general overview-of-comics questions because you've had an amazing crash course—both at SPX and from the *Best American Comics* project—in contemporary comics. So in reading over all this recent work, did you notice any major changes in comics from when you started making them?

There are more people doing what I would still call alternative comics. People are doing more stuff about everyday life than they did, and comics are more realistic than they were. There's a lot more irony and satire in comics than there was. In general, comics are just broadening—becoming a much more interesting and exciting field and I hope that the trend continues. I guess a lot will depend on the success of so-called "graphic novels." I think that straight comic books—you know, the pamphlet-sized comic books—have been taking a beating these days but graphic novels have been selling really well, which probably has something to do with the distribution system. Graphic novels—you can get them in book bookstores, not comic-book stores. If the graphic novel continues to be popular or becomes more popular, I think that will be a great shot in the arm because a much greater variety of people will be able to see them in places like Borders and Barnes & Noble.

There's a feeding frenzy going on right now, with new artists being offered publishing deals at alarming rates.

Yeah, it's the wave of the future, the graphic

novel, and they want to get in on it.

Do you have any advice for new artists?

Don't quit your day gig, that's the main thing. If you advance, don't expect it to be a rapid process. Be prepared to put up with a lot of shit and disappointment, because it's a tough field.

You commented on the phrase "graphic novel." What do you think of it?

I don't think it should be used, I think it's misleading. A novel is fiction. But if it sells, all right, let it sell the stuff—I'm not going to make a major thing out of it.

I was noticing that *Our Cancer Year* was shelved in the Graphic Novel section of bookstores. This has been a discussion point among comics artists in the last couple of years. Alison Bechdel, for example, mentioned recently that, with *Dykes to Watch Out For* shelved in the Gay and Lesbian section and *Fun Home* shelved in Memoir, she's never been shelved in the Graphic Novel section. Do you think if *Our Cancer Year* were released today it would be considered a book about health as opposed to simply a comic?

I really have no idea. I would hope that comics would get popular enough that they would shelve them by subject, not by form. But that remains to be seen.

How do you think the loss of the pamphlet comic would affect the future of comics?

It will make comics much more difficult to produce for the creators. It's relatively easy to do a 32-page book as opposed to a 150- or 200-page book. A lot of people may drop out of the scene because doing graphic novel takes a long time and a lot of work.

Some would argue that the future of comics might exist online.

That's a possibility, but if comics grow online, they're going to grow in print. If they go down, they're going to go down everywhere. The future of comics may rest with the future of the graphic novel.

What about self publishing?

People are out there creating some really good stuff but it's not getting out to the audience, maybe because of distribution problems. People are putting out their own comics and Xeroxing them and let's say they make a couple hundred and swap them with each other but that's not going to help in the long term very much.

I ask about the changes you may have noted over the past three decades because in that time you've been one of the most influential figures in comics. That's mostly been great, because it's helped to expand and explode comics.

Well, that was my intention, yeah.

That's crazy. Don't you think that's crazy?

My plan's workin' out, yeah. [Laughs.]

I mean, comics aren't just superheroes anymore. That's partially because of you.

Well, you might be right. Before me, other people were doing alternative comics, but I was emphasizing realism, and I was emphasizing every day life. A lot of the underground comics of the 1960s were about bohemian life, and drugs and sex and stuff like that. My stuff was about eeking out a marginal existence in a marginal city like Cleveland, which I figured a lot of people could identify with. I wanted to make comics people could identify with. And I never worried about showing myself in a bad light, like cheap, or whatever. Because a lot of people were like that, number one, and number two, I didn't kill anybody. I really didn't do anything that horrible, I was just being a human being, with a human being's faults.

You were trying to get regular people to read comics?

Yeah, sure.

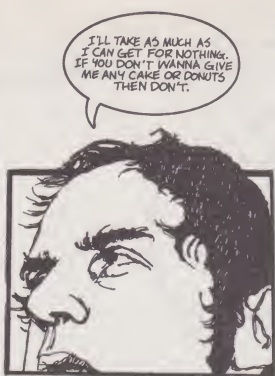
Do you think that that happened?

I'll tell you this, the comic books that I've done for Random House and Vertigo have sold better than anything else I've done, and the Random House has mostly been to regular folk. And my Doubleday stuff [*gestures to the 2003 American Splendor movie tie-in collection on the desk*—those volumes sold better than my comic books sold, even though they were more expensive. So I don't really look at the current comic-book audience as being very useful to me. For the most part, they want superheroes.

The downside of your influence has been that there are a lot of bad comics about people's boring jobs.

Well you're gonna find that with anything. The bad stuff's usually going to outweigh the good. I mean, in terms of influencing some of these bad autobiographical cartoonists, I influenced some pretty good ones. So I'll just take credit for that.

You're currently moving away from autobio into journalistic and historical comics. How do you like that?



I like it. I got a wide variety of interests. I was always interested in left-wing politics ever since I was a kid. I mean, people, no matter how clever they are, sometimes people get sick of the same thing, if you go to the well too often. If your work's the same all the time. So I'm trying to vary it more, I'm focusing on subjects I've never done before. Like I'm working on a book that's a history of SDS and one that's supposed to be about the Beat Generation, and I'm working on one where the illustration for it hasn't been completed yet about Macedonia. I'm even gonna be continuing to do *American Splendor* for Vertigo. They're supposed to come out with it in the fall. We'll see how they do.

You've strayed from pure autobio before, however. You've occasionally given yourself a different name, and in the movie *American Splendor* there is a fictional character Fred. He's clearly not the illustrator Frank Stack who worked with you and Joyce on *Our Cancer Year*.

Well, the thing about fiction with Fred—my wife really hated my foster daughter's father and she didn't want to spell out how we came together and so she asked if she could help with the script and make a composite character out of this guy. As far as using my Yiddish name and the other names, like Marv, I was just thinking that it would be better if people didn't think everything I did was autobiographical, but after a while I figured that was stupid. They were going to know, so there was no use in shamming everybody.

When you're writing, though, do you fictionalize much?

No, no, I don't fictionalize very much. I don't say that the best writing is the most realistic writing, but it's the best for me, it's the best I can do. The best I can do is stick with the details, and the more accurate the details are,

the more people will believe in my work and identify with it.

Now that you're a little older, and are about to restart *American Splendor*, are you going to try to retain a gritty realism in telling stories of your own life?

Yeah, well, why not? That's been the basis of my work, writing about—whether you call it gritty realism or not—writing about people's everyday lives. That's one of the reasons I got into comics, because I saw there was no realistic movement in comics where there were realistic movements in just about every other art form. I started doing realistic comics, and just for making the attempt, I've gotten a lot of credit. That was one of the reasons I got into it, opportunism.

Do you feel like you got the credit you deserved?

Well I'm getting more of it now. Who's to say how much credit I deserve. Just as much as people want to give me, I guess.

The flipside of the question about realism is that, now that you've had a major motion picture made about your life, and you're making a living off comics, are you going to present your life as realistic if things improve?

What do you mean, is it going to be entirely pessimistic or am I going to mix some optimism into it? I was thinking about that too. Ever since the movie, people have been referring to me as a curmudgeon. I think they mainly get that idea from Paul Giamatti's portrayal of me.

Oh, I don't think so, Harvey.

Well, have it your way.

I mean, I'm not saying you are a curmudgeon . . .

I'm having a pretty nice time in Chicago now.

"I wanted to make comics people could identify with. And I never worried about showing myself in a bad light, like cheap, or whatever. Because a lot of people were like that, number one, and number two, I didn't kill anybody."

I haven't been here in a while, and it's nice to come back and see old friends. I think I'm gonna do a comic story about my trip to Chicago. I already did one about my trip to Huntington, West Virginia so this may start a series—you know, Harvey Pekar on the road.

I guess I'm also asking, has success been what you expected it would be?

I never expected it to be anything, and my life hasn't changed. I mean, if I get extra money, I put it in the bank. My lifestyle is the same as it always was. I hang out with the same people, I live in the same place, I eat the same kinda food. That may be kinda uninspiring to a lot of people but that's the way I am.

How do you feel like surviving cancer has affected you—or are you tired of answering that question?

No, it really doesn't get asked of me all that much. I've had cancer and been in remission for cancer . . . you know, what really bothers me on a day-to-day basis is having major depression. That's what really dogs me, and I haven't been able to deal with that particularly well. I go to an HMO and see a shrink, which is covered by my pension, and they give me a lot of pills and they found a combination and quantity of pills that actually helps me out some, but I'm still walking around feeling very pessimistic and depressed. I don't know what I'm going to do about that. Right now I'm reading a book about cognitive therapy and I'll see if I can get something out of that. I don't think it's going to erase my problem. I don't really like being like this, I'd rather be nice and cheerful, and not think that everything's going to end up as a failure. I know in the long run we're all dead but while we're alive it's better to feel good than bad, so that's what I'm gonna try and do. ©

Harvey Talks to Anne E. Moore by Harvey Pekar

This conversation takes place
on the shores of beautiful Lake
Michigan on a breezy, moonlit
night

Anne, I thought I'd do a transcript
for you so people can see what
my "storyboard" illustration is like



{Awesome!}

You really made my job editing
that Houghton-Mifflin book so
enjoyable AND so easy. You were
right on time with the information
I asked you for. I'm from the old school,
so I really appreciate your ~~efficiency~~
efficiency AND good humor in getting
everything to me.



And the Punk Planet party I went
to was a lot of fun. All the pie
you can eat, and different flavors
too - what a deal!



Oh, it was
no trouble

So anyway I hope we can do
some promoting of the Houghton-
Mifflin book together this October



THE FIRST thing I
gotta tell you is
thanks for all the
stuff you've done
for me



Then too, you were so on the ball
when I came to see ~~you~~ ^{everyone} in Chicago.
Your interview questions were
fresh and provocative and you
handled my live interview at
the book festival like a real pro

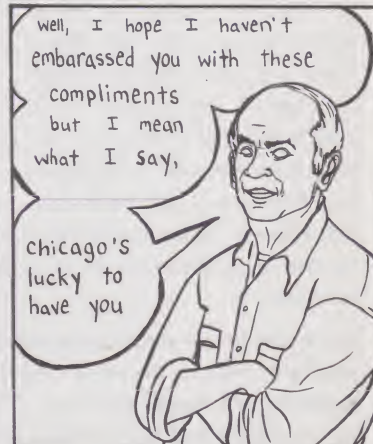
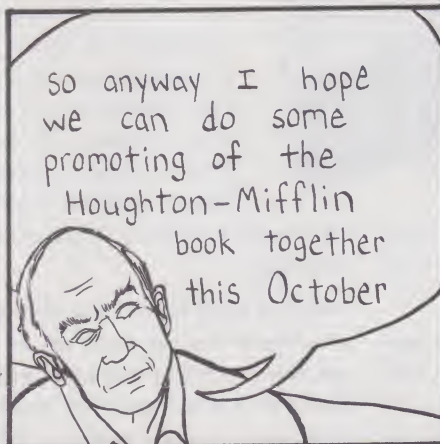
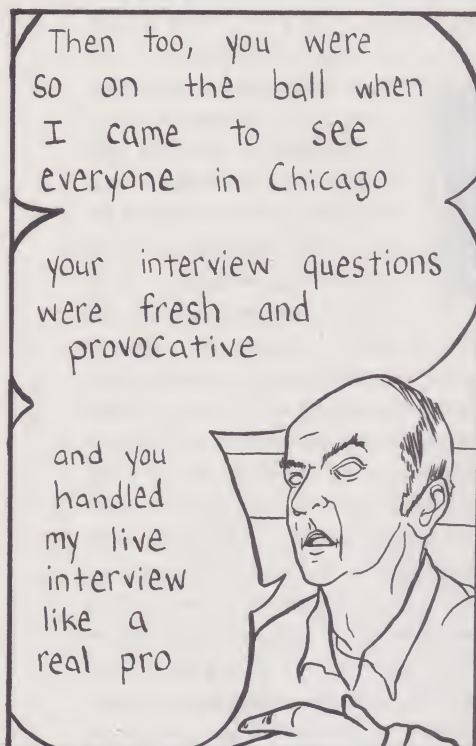
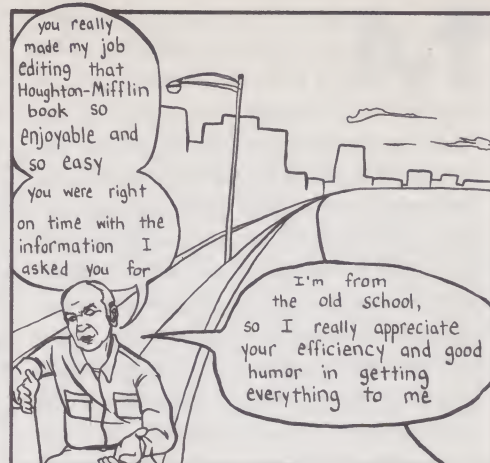
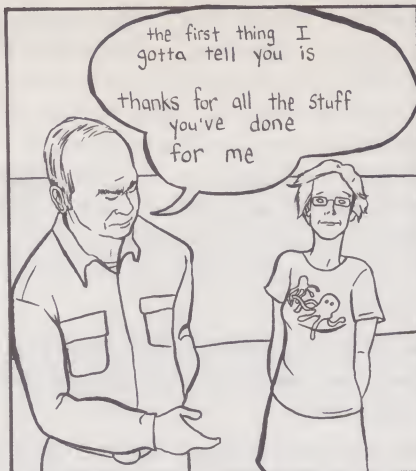


And setting it up so I could meet
Chris Ware, Joan Brunetti,
Becca Taylor and others too
numerous to mention. Hey, you
better believe that ~~was~~ was cool.



Well, I hope I haven't ~~embarrassed~~
embarrassed ^{you} with these compliments,
but I mean what I say.
(Chicago's lucky to have you.)





Michelle Tea catapulted to queer icon status as cofounder (with Sini Anderson) of Sister Spit, the raucous all-girl spoken word open mic and traveling roadshow that terrorized the country in the mid-to-late-'90s. Her first novel *Valencia* delivered the dirt on dyke hipsterdom, desperation, and debauchery in San Francisco's Mission District. Then came *The Chelsea Whistle*, a memoir about the perils and perseverances of Tea's childhood; the anthology she edited *Without a Net: The Female Experience of Growing up Working Class*; and the graphic novel *Rent Girl* (with Laurenn McCubbin). Tea's new novel, *Rose of No Man's Land*, a mesmerizing take on the horrors and highs at that point between childhood and the end of the world, has garnered critical acclaim from all over the place, and now Hollywood has even entered the picture.

Between touring with the Sex Workers' Art Show and touring for *Rose of No Man's Land*, Michelle Tea sat down to talk with *Punk Planet* about intuition, mall culture, compromise, and accountability.

Interview by **Mattilda,**
AKA Matt Bernstein Sycamore

I want to start with the point in *Rose of No Man's Land* that blew me away: when Trisha, the narrator, does crystal for the first time with her new friend Rose. Everything from there to the end is one extended revelation filtered through breakdown. I wonder how you managed to convey so much complexity in such an intensely personal way.

I was kind of freaked out the whole time I was writing it and crossing my fingers, and just hoping that it made sense and that it worked, and feeling most of the time like I really didn't know, and then sometimes feeling like I hated it, and sometimes like I loved it. But most of the time I was really in the dark about it. It was just kind of intuitive—I just kind of went with whatever I felt like was the thing to do. That's the least helpful answer in the whole world. It's really true.

You're able to talk about crystal without simplifying it: "Oh, it's the worst thing that ever happened. It'll destroy your life . . ." Or, "Oh, it's so amazing and it's just going to change the way you see everything."

Some of the best times of my life were spent high on crystal. So I totally know . . . I always felt like any drug I'd ever done, there was always, no matter how great a time I was having, there was always this weird void right under the surface. And part of the exhilaration of it was, you're getting over on that void and you're like "Oooh!" Then sometimes you come down a little bit and you see it there—I just wanted to talk about both of those things.

The void that you're talking about—that's what always made me do more. But you probably miss the crash.

I liked the crash sometimes. There was something really great about feeling so ruined. Sometimes hangovers are really enjoyable, and felt kind of glamorous, and languid, and feeling crashed out almost felt like you'd just been on this intense road trip or something, and you'd made it to your destination, and you're totally wrecked from it, but you did it, and now you're going to take a bunch of pills and go to sleep. But then, that's only at the beginning. Toward the end, the crashing, everything gets really sort of terrible, and not glamorous anymore, and really awful, and you're calling into work because you're crying and you can't stop. I had to do that once. I can't remember what I said as an excuse—it wasn't like, "I did too much drugs and I can't stop sobbing," but that's pretty much what the reason was. ¶ I don't do drugs anymore, 'cause I just can't. It would be such a lie to be like, "I can't do it anymore, so it's bad! I can't do those bad drugs anymore!" I just think I can't do them anymore because I'm an addict and I used them addictively, ultimately, and not everyone has that relationship to drugs. And even if you do have that relationship to drugs, that's what you need to go through. If you're an addict, you need to get addicted. You need to come out on the other side, hopefully. And have that great knowledge.

There's a point in the same section of the novel where you talk about sex as breaking and entering, and I thought that was a really good way of talking about the themes of the whole book. Sex is like stealing something and replacing it with something else.

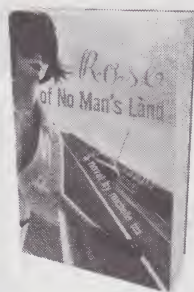
One thing that was on my mind is that in the mainstream popular consciousness, certain things are irredeemably bad. Like getting strung out on drugs is bad, and you've lost something if you've gotten addicted to drugs. This idea that you've lost control, or you've lost your mind, or something. Or you've lost your virginity, you know how girls always "lose" their virginity. Or if you do sex work, you've somehow lost . . . Any transgression gets marked as a sort of loss. And what's never talked about is what you get from it.

Did you go back to Boston before you wrote the book?

To be honest, when I was working as a prostitute in Boston, I did a call in one of those buildings, and they're much nicer than I made them in the book. I made them real crapholes. [But] I got inspired to write the book while I was in Boston. I was hanging out with my friend Peter, and we both grew up on the North Shore, we were on Route 1. And then we went into the

Square One Mall in Saugus, and I used to hang out there when I was 13. And then—this is really embarrassing and funny—we went to the Waldenbooks or Barnes and Noble or something—the big one on the side of Route 1—and they have this local authors table, and my book wasn't on it, and I got really indignant, 'cause Chelsea [where I grew up] doesn't have a bookstore, so that was like the closest bookstore. And I was like, what the fuck am I going to do? Write a book about Saugus? Fine, I'll write a book about Saugus. It's settled. I'm going to write a book about Route 1. And I realized, I don't know Saugus at all, and I think I'm just too damaged from writing memoirs—if I don't know a place, I can't write about it. So I decided I would just make up a place, and put the Square One Mall in it, and then make up the interior of the mall, because I didn't know it well enough to really document it. It was so fun to make stuff up. So I'm really glad they didn't put me on the author's table. I mean, I surely would have rested on my laurels and done nothing.

Barnes and Noble is good for something, I guess. I was wondering about your graphic novel, *Rent Girl*, based on the time when you were turning tricks, which is now being turned into a Showtime series.





Michelle TEA



Or not. All this crazy shit just happened like a week ago. I got a call saying, "Move to LA! It's happening!" And I freaked out and started re-arranging my life, and it turned out it wasn't nearly ready to be happening. Everyone is using totally alarming, panic-inducing language, you know, like: "This deal is in peril! It's all going to fall apart! Showtime's gonna walk away!" And then I hear: "These people are fucking you over! You'll get nothing! They're going to make millions, and you'll have nothing!" And meanwhile I was having tea and I was crying at my table, and being like, "What's going on?" People are crazy in LA They

yell and they swear. It's like a brawl. It's really intense. It's so brutal. I felt like, when it all crumbled, I realized that I thought that it was going to happen, and I got really disappointed.

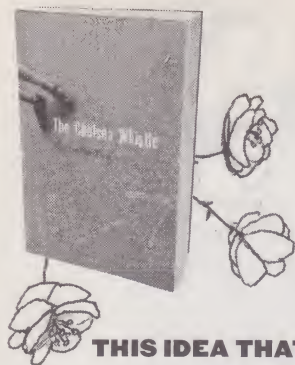
Are you worried about becoming a sort of badge of dyke realness for Hollywood to exploit?

I don't feel exploitable. Maybe that's naive of me, and maybe I'll find out differently once I've been in the jaw of the monster, but it's exciting to me to think of doing things on TV, 'cause it just seems insane and absurd and I watch TV. That would be really bizarre and fun to be able to get as much of

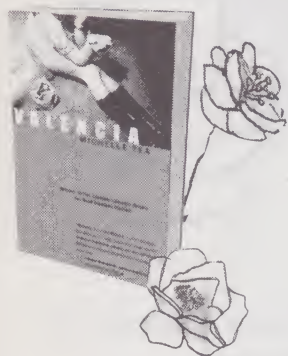
my aesthetic and my interests and my culture and personality out there as I could.

But do you think there's really a chance that you're going to get the whole thing?

The whole thing? No. Certainly not. It's an enormous compromise, right off the bat. Right off the bat it's a total compromise—yeah. So what you really need to push . . . I think you need to figure out what your bottom line is when you're doing something like that, you know?



**THIS IDEA THAT YOU'VE
LOST CONTROL, OR YOU'VE
LOST YOUR MIND, OR
SOMETHING. OR YOU'VE
LOST YOUR VIRGINITY, YOU
KNOW HOW GIRLS ALWAYS
"LOSE" THEIR VIRGINITY.
OR IF YOU DO SEX WORK,
YOU'VE SOMEHOW LOST ...
ANY TRANSGRESSION GETS
MARKED AS A SORT OF
LOSS. AND WHAT'S NEVER
TALKED ABOUT IS WHAT YOU
GET FROM IT.**



Are you worried that if it does happen that you will become so surrounded by it that you won't be able to do the creative work that is meaningful to you?

Firstly, I do believe that it would be really meaningful for me to do writing based on *Rent Girl* for TV. I'm not worried about my creativity or my inspiration being somehow contaminated from doing TV work—I think the only thing that would get in the way of me writing would just be that I didn't have enough time, because I was working so hard on something else.

Do you worry about being put in a position where you're exploiting the people you're trying to represent?

Well, I feel like I would do my absolute best to create characters that are interesting and honest and real. So if that winds up being a massive failure, my apologies, you know what I mean? Seriously. I don't mean to be flip. Like I will do my best and if it's out of my hands, and it's another shitty show exploiting the idea of sex workers, again my apologies. You know, the thing is, I think that if I just don't worry about things, and I don't think that much about the future, and I'm an optimist—so that's a deadly combination to be walking into Los Angeles to do a TV show, 'cause you're probably right—it will be totally terrible, you know, and the worst anti-feminist, anti-revolutionary show, and then it all kind of stemmed from a book that I wrote.

Recently, sex work has been increasingly presented as an identity choice for edgy urban consumers—not the actual thing that happens, just the idea. It reminds me of the way gentrification works, in terms of marginalized queers and artists moving to neighborhoods, like say the early '90s in the Mission—where we both lived, and which is sort of what you represent in *Valencia*—which was the point where the neighborhood was transformed from a working class neighborhood into a hot yuppie playground. I guess my question is: how can marginalized queers fight that path?

Fight the path of being appropriated, or appropriating others? Well, I don't know. The place that I grew up in was a really slummy city that was primarily Puerto Rican, it was primarily people of color living there, and then really racist white people. I think that we all know that it's absolutely true that the path of gentrification is like, you know, neighborhoods that are populated by people of color, and then white artists

and queers come in, and then rich white people come in. It was always really weird for me because I always have lived in so many places where white people have lived with people of color, and so when people were talking about that gentrification thing—with like, "We're gentrifying"—I felt like that was a kind of middle-class argument, 'cause I felt like, "But where else will I live?" You can't tell people who don't have any money not to move into a poor neighborhood. It's in a lot of ways beyond our control. So then I have to think about what's in my control, and I think it's to have a consciousness about it, have a consciousness about where you live. Have a consciousness about the neighborhood you're moving into and who your neighbors are and how they might be feeling about your presence. It's just one of many things I feel kind of like at a loss about what to really do.

Do you think accountability is a starting point?

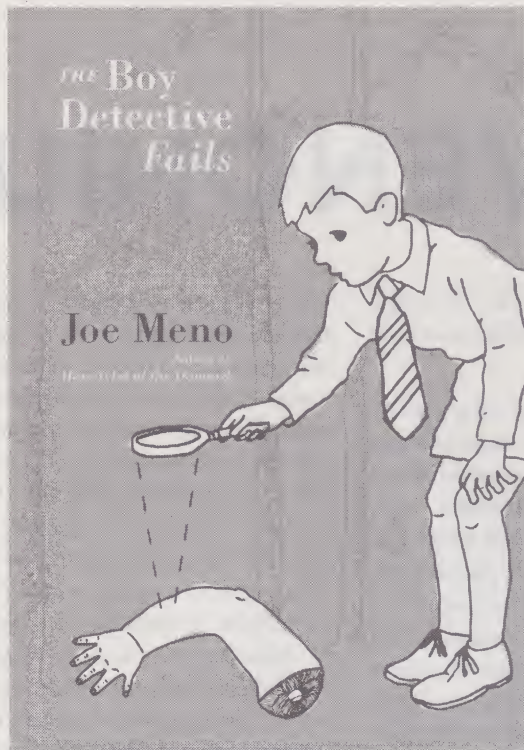
Yeah. Being aware of the issues that your presence might be bringing up in the neighborhood. We are all at the mercy of something a little larger than us, which is the market, which is money and capitalism and landownership. I just feel like, ideally, we would have the people who have more power than us being accountable, like landlords being accountable for their rent and for their evictions, and stuff like that.

Or just that they would be evicted and we wouldn't have to deal with them.

Right! Some things I feel like are so much bigger than me that I just trip out and feel frustrated and some things I feel like I can kind of put my finger on something I can do and it's always really fucking miniscule. You know what I mean? And is it even just to make myself feel better, or something else? I don't think that we're going to cure gentrification, you know? But something really fucked is happening, cities are out of control—it didn't used to be this bad. It might not look the same as it looks in the Mission as in Chapel Hill, but it's still people not being able to afford to live in the place that they want to live in, and why? Because it was at some point affordable and suddenly it's not anymore. I don't understand what is happening under the surface that I'm not seeing or something, but it's really incredibly difficult to live in cities. What are we supposed to do, go live on farms? How will we find each other? ☺

Mattilda, AKA Matt Bernstein Sycamore is the editor, most recently, of *Nobody Passes: Rejecting the Rules of Gender and Conformity* (out in December) and *That's Revolting! Queer Strategies for Resisting Assimilation* (expanded second edition out in November). Visit www.mattbernsteinsycamore.com.

The triumphant new book from the author of *Hairstyles of the Damned*



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by Joe Meno

In the twilight of a childhood full of wonder, Billy Argo, boy detective, is brokenhearted to find that his younger sister and crime-solving partner, Caroline, has committed suicide. Ten years later, Billy, age thirty, returns from an extended stay at St. Vitus' Hospital for the Mentally Ill to discover a world full of unimaginable strangeness: office buildings vanish without reason, small animals turn up without their heads, and cruel villains ride city buses to complete their evil schemes.

Lost within this unwelcoming place, Billy finds the companionship of two lonely children, Effie and Gus Mumford—one a science fair genius, the other a charming, silent bully. With a nearly forgotten bravery, Billy confronts the monotony of his job in telephone sales, the awkward beauty of a desperate pickpocket named Penny Maple, and the seemingly impossible solution to the mystery of his sister's death. Along a path laden with hidden clues and codes that dare to be deciphered, the boy detective may learn the greatest secret of all: the necessity of the unknown.

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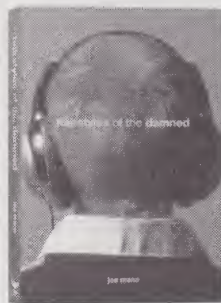


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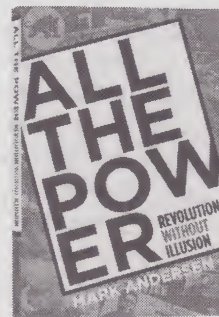


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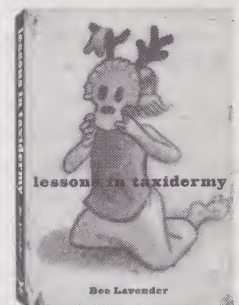
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IAN SVENONIUS

When Ian Svenonius says that he loves rock 'n' roll, you'd better believe it. As the frontman for influential DC bands the Nation of Ulysses, the Make-Up, and Weird War (and not to mention a host of one-off projects and solo acts, plus regular DJ gigs around the DC area), Svenonius has helped to carve out a niche as the underground's agent provocateur.

With the release of his first book of essays, *The Psychic Soviet*, the manifestos and proclamations that encompass so much of his musical theory (just look at NOU's album "13-Point Program to Destroy America" or the Make-Ups extensive liner notes on the *Gospel Yeh-Yeh* for a taste) are transformed into essays on the state of rock 'n' roll in America today—which, in a typically Svenonius way require extensive discussions of Communism, religious extremism, and vampirism.

It's a book that, like the best of Svenonius's work, makes you wonder if he's a mad genius or simply crafting an elaborate joke on you. After sitting down with Svenonius, I'm ready believe that maybe it's *both*.

Interview by **Daniel Sinker**
Photograph by **Asia Argento**

This is an interview for the "Revenge of Print" issue.

So records are dead, that's what *Punk Planet* is saying.

Well, that's what we're saying for this issue. We said it about 20 issues ago too, but apparently it needs saying again.

Every now and then everybody says, "Records are over, it's all about films now!" But there's something about records, they just keep on

kicking. They're almost dead now, I suppose. It always takes a while for these things to actually come to pass.

One reason I wanted to talk to you is because you straddle the line between music and writing. So much of your musical output before *The Psychic Soviet* revolved around these manifestos and philosophies and because of that, a book seems like a very logical extension. But your work is equally associated with rhythm and dance and the physicality that comes with music, and so in that way a book seems counter intuitive, because you can't have those things in it. So what was the motivation to do the book?

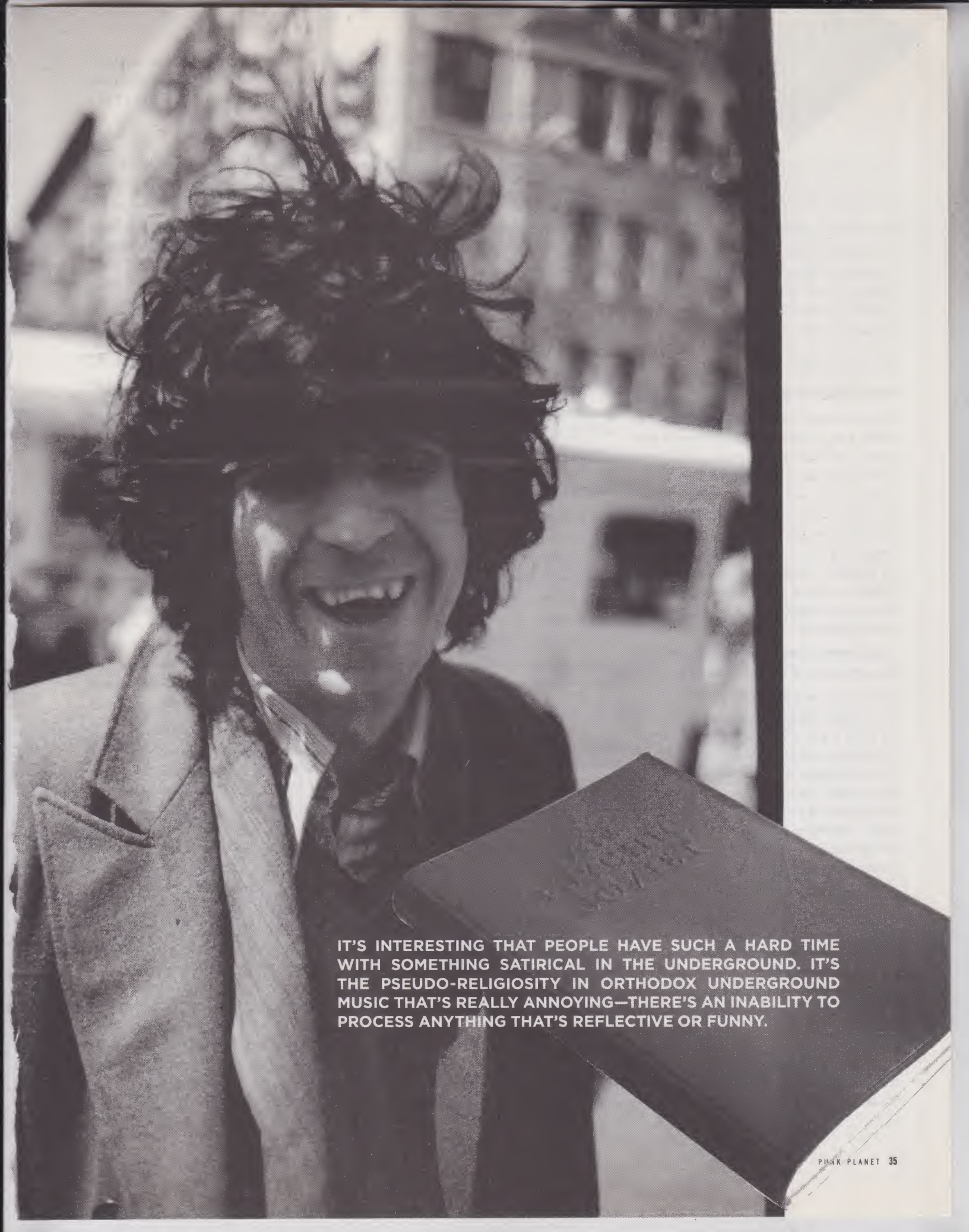
Every medium has its own strengths and weaknesses. The thing that attracts people to a band is that it can be everything. The way rock 'n' roll is designed as opposed to other artforms is that there are almost no parameters. It's the ultimate liberal art form—liberal in the old sense, meaning expansive and able to appropriate any stimuli that it comes upon. Just like the Doors appropriated theater and poetry, or soul music appropriated church music, or the Byrds appropriated folk, rock 'n' roll doesn't respect any boundaries and that's why it's so attractive. You bring along all of your interests to the group. But at the same time, you can't really work out ideas in a really complicated way because groups are really simple. When we play a show, I can't really lecture people. As a result, I've been writing articles outside of the groups that I do that aren't based on the program of the group, but are more of an explanation of what rock 'n' roll really is. The essays that were applicable to that kind of theme, I thought I'd put into a book.

What made you start writing about rock?

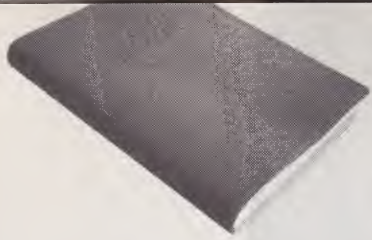
Well, when you grow up having inherited the expression of rock 'n' roll as the narrative to your life, then you associate it with everything that is good—it becomes a surrogate, similar to how other people might feel about their nation or religion. But once I learned about the cultural Cold War, about the CIA's subsidization of particular apolitical artforms to fight against Commie propaganda, it made me realize that the leftist narrative that we all imagine is in rock 'n' roll might not be there. We hate politicians because they are egomaniac shills who are murderers and charlatans and liars, but rock 'n' roll feels like the last heroic expression because the people involved aren't these deplorable figures. But at the same time, are we not the unwitting shills of this global system? That's one thing the essays in the book talk about: to understand rock 'n' roll, you have to understand the era that it came out of—the Cold War. To understand that, you have to understand the ideological conflict that happened then, and you have to look at Communism and the other enlightenment philosophies, which leads to the bourgeois revolution, which leads to the renaissance and the crusades . . . The book goes through all that history just to find out what rock 'n' roll is, because that's what we're saddled with as our expression. ¶ I'm not abandoning rock 'n' roll by doing this—I love it. It's the most powerful thing in our lives. But now that the corporations have sort of demolished underground music, and the way people seem fine with that, well . . .

It's interesting to say that corporations have demolished underground music, but you also continue to make underground music and write about it too.

Yeah, but we live in an era where people have given up the ghost pretty much in terms of that



IT'S INTERESTING THAT PEOPLE HAVE SUCH A HARD TIME WITH SOMETHING SATIRICAL IN THE UNDERGROUND. IT'S THE PSEUDO-RELIGIOSITY IN ORTHODOX UNDERGROUND MUSIC THAT'S REALLY ANNOYING—THERE'S AN INABILITY TO PROCESS ANYTHING THAT'S REFLECTIVE OR FUNNY.



YOU GO INTO BORDERS BOOKS AND THERE ARE 5,000 BOOKS ABOUT THESE ROCK BANDS AND THEY'RE ALL ACCEPTING THIS ESSENTIAL PREMISE OF ROCK 'N' ROLL. I WANTED TO WRITE AN ALTERNATIVE HISTORY OF THE MUSIC.

stuff. There's no longer the missionary sensibility around underground music. Cult equals loser in most people's minds now.

Do you regret that?

The state of affairs is pretty gnarly, yeah. But what are you going to do? I mean, there is a dusting of good things that comes along with it. There's no longer this idiotic orthodoxy about musical styles that used to exist in underground music. It was an orthodoxy that resembled religious provincialism.

Why do you think we've arrived at this point?

Well, punk came out of the tail end of the '70s, which was a radical era. When people talk about "The '60s" they're really typically discussing what was going on in the '70s—pirate radio, and the women's rights movement, and gay rights. Everything that we now associate with leftist thought, it's all from the early '70s. And coming out of punk, we were super affected by that. But a lot of the people making music now, they came up in the '90s, and I think the corporate propaganda organs became so much more effective then.

They certainly proved to be much more savvy than I think any of us gave us credit for.

If you've ever read Michael Parenti—he's a Soviet apologist historian—one thing he talks a lot about is that while people thought the Soviet Union was this Orwellian slave state, really their propaganda wasn't sophisticated at all. They couldn't manipulate people because they weren't thinking in marketing terms. They didn't make themselves sexy. The way capitalism crushed socialism was through marketing campaigns. America spent millions of dollars—even recently, with the Orange Revolution—marketing candidates in this MTV, sexy way, they play up the youth aspect, and it's so different than what was there. It's like guns against the Indians: there is no resistance. The same with the Pope: the Polish pope was telegenic, a people person, a baby kisser, and he played this political game that was so foreign to those that came before.

One thing that strikes me when you talk about this stuff is that, I feel like, ever since the Nation of Ulysses days, there's always been

a question of whether you're serious about any of this stuff at all. You present a persona in what you do: you present a concept and a character and you run with it, and some people seem to interpret that as a big joke.

It's interesting that people have such a hard time with something satirical in the underground. It's the pseudo-religiosity in orthodox underground music that's really annoying—there's an inability to process anything that's reflective or funny. I mean take Funkadelic: would anyone doubt them? No way, they're totally powerful. But is there humor with Funkadelic? Yes, of course. With Bob Dylan? Yes. The Rolling Stones? Yes. The Beatles? Yes. All these people used humor, but would you ever question the sincerity of what they're doing? No.

But I'm curious if the book came out in part because of a level of frustration that maybe people weren't taking you seriously—or were maybe taking you too seriously? Was this a way to break the restraints of the three-minute song?

No, I think the book is exactly the same kind of thing as my music—it'll obfuscate even more, if anything. But the thing to me is that I don't like songs with too many words. I like a song that's almost like grunting. Sure, there are great song craftspeople, like Bob Dylan, but people think that because he wrote a lot of words, it's a tract, but it's just rhythm.

There is something inherently different with the way people interact with music and with books. Music is this incredibly personal thing even though . . .

We *imagine* that it's personal.

Right, right. Even though we all know that this is a mass-produced product, and at any given time there are dozens, hundreds, thousands of people listening to the same thing at the same time, there is this emotional core where you think "this is a song for me." But when I read a book, even a book that I love, I don't think "this is a book for me." I don't have that same kind of emotional connection that I have with a song.

I agree with you. Music is almost metaphysical. It's a thing to get swept up in. That's why in the book when I'm discussing music, there may be a lot of cynicism about music and what it means, but obviously anybody who cares enough to write a book about it loves music. ¶ What I hate is the fake narrative of rock 'n' roll. You go into Borders Books and there are 5,000 books about these rock bands and they're all accepting this essential premise of rock 'n' roll. I wanted to write an alternative history of the music. Nobody discusses rock 'n' roll in terms of its use as propaganda overseas. The Velvet Revolution is called that for a reason—Lou Reed supposedly destroyed Communism. Look at the Ramones' "Rocket to Russia"—that song proposes blowing up Russia. It's an enormous aspect of rock 'n' roll. And now, after the Cold War, rock 'n' roll is kind of irrelevant, while hip hop has replaced it. If the covert ideology of rock 'n' roll was the market economy, then it's already done its job. Hip hop is the more honed version: it's just about the product.

One thing that really struck me about the book, and I'm reminded of it as you sit here and talk about the Cold War and the ins and outs of the last 50 years, is that a fuckload of research went into these theories.

Yeah, there is a lot of research in it, but it's not academic. Any academic would hate this book. The thing about academia is that most of the people in it are writing for each other. The whole nature of that game is they beat you into submission—you can't say anything without 500 footnotes. The book has nothing to do with academia, and any of them would hate it and think it's totally pseudo-intellectual. And that's because it is. It's not a book for them. It's a book for *people*, for rock 'n' rollers. But you *have* to look to history to make these points, and it's really important to understand why the so-called West developed in a different way, and how the art as we know it comes from the bourgeois Western culture and it's used by them as an enormous tool. The main point of the book is that this art is really powerful, but the people that make it don't even understand its power. ©

UNDERSTANDING THE ASSUMED, OR "FAKE" TRANS-ATLANTIC ACCENT

By Ian F Svenonius

The fake British accent is a fail-safe staple of American humour, and has displaced the thrown pie almost entirely as THE ubiquitous low-brow larf device. "Spinal Tap" and "Austin Powers" are just two of its billion dollar beneficiaries. This is a satisfying feature of modern life, since the British are a grotesque race, ripe for parody. What is remarkable though is that British humorists have not returned the compliment. Besides Monty Python's memorable board room scene in "Meaning of Life," imitating the stupid, crass, and boorish Yankees for comic effect yields little revenue for those across the pond. Imitating vulgar Yankees as expression though is highly profitable, the pathway to immortality and a house in the country, as witnessed by artists from Cliff Richard and Mick Jagger to Robert Plant, Tom Jones, Ian Astbury, and Joss Stone. While the British accent bestows hilarity on the North American, the North American accent lends earthy sexuality, pathos, and danger to the Englishman. With the simple affectation of a Colonial drawl, the limey is converted from public school ponce into Id-animal.

And yet, the Britisher is not internationally thought to be a figure of fun, nor is the North American synonymous with uncomplicated carnality. In fact, the Englishman is afforded a respect uncommon to any other race. The British empire is commonly thought to have been brought about by politeness for example, with the English troops in Iraq conspicuously spared the degradations of the "Improvised Roadside Explosive Devices" that plague their North American counterparts. Meanwhile, the North American is not thought to be earthy and authentic but rather the opposite: plastic, materialistic, and alienated from nature and community. Foreigners flock to Las Vegas just to have this stereotype confirmed. Las Vegas residents boast of their fastest growing economy and population in the country even though it is based on Europeans coming to laugh at them (and via them, at all North Americans). Why then, are the affected accents of the respective nationalities understood in these particular ways?

First we must understand that an affected accent is not an imitation as much as it is a disguise, and the function of a disguise is not only to obscure ones identity from others but also to escape from the strictures and conventions of ones own identity. Like the leering sleaze that Halloween and Mardi Gras revellers allow themselves once they don the respective ensemble of the observed occasion, or the authoritarian brutality that the beat cop's blue suit grants him, the accent is a new hat that gives the user a special set of behaviours, ethics, and or etiquette. The invading soldier overseas for example would probably find it very difficult to murder and harass civilians in whatever occupied country without first slipping into a special army outfit and thereupon assuming the particular morality that comes with it.

"War" is based on convincing normal people to kill other normal people, and this extraordinary behaviour—taught at boot camp—would not be possible without the soldier's uniform, a set of special clothes designed especially for killing people. These clothes are studded with signifiers which celebrate the job of its inhabitant. Many army outfits for example come with a regimental motto, such as "Killing is My Business and Business Has Been Good," "Death From Above," or "Hell On Wheels," which laud the murdering prowess of the wearer. This killing prowess and the special morality that allows it is bestowed by the outfit, and once the outfit is retired (with the soldier's discharge), so is the special morality—though in practice this is often a difficult maneuver, as witnessed by the high percentage of ex-army sociopaths (e.g. The Texas tower shooter, DC sniper, et al) who were

unable to take their newly taught morality off with the clothes.

The Hell's Angels and other outlaw biker gangs are mostly comprised of veterans who couldn't readjust to society and who thus roam the freeways eternally, running drugs, urinating/ defecating on new initiate's clothing, and performing "hits" for the mob. A disguise or affectation is therefore, obviously a difficult thing to willfully switch on and off. And since we have determined that an accent is in fact a disguise, it is important to understand what the affectation of the various accents means, if it is dangerous and if it should be outlawed.

First, the British accent. The British accent as done by the American male is a cry that reveals a deep sense of inadequacy; a smirking lampoon of a people that the would-be-Brit envies and emulates in a desperate fist-shaking at God that he was not counted as a member of their often envied island race.

Island people—not just the English, but Hawaiians, Filipinos, Icelanders, Japanese et al— are always haughty, proud of the relative sanctity of their gene pool, and it's true that the Anglo-Saxons have been overrun and inseminated by fewer conquering races than most of their mainland European competitors. The Britisher therefore believes in his own superiority and the entire extent of his art is intended to inform others of this fact. The North American is therefore, from a very tender age, bombarded by PBS programming of "Masterpiece Theatre," Winnie the Pooh, Black Sabbath t-shirts, and Paddington Bear; one thousand pronouncements by the English culture industry of their betterness over their former colonists. To the young and sensitive soul, this abuse is highly affecting and results in paradoxical feelings of envy, affinity, and disregard for the taunting foreigners which sometimes expresses itself in a parodic English accent.

This comedic device is therefore, under the pretence of being parody, a barely disguised desire to join the ranks of the elite, a cloying, whining, disgusting piece of ladder climbing, like a boy on the playground throwing a rock at a girl he admires. It is a disguise that reveals its wearer as a self-loathing, race supremacist, class-traitor and must be abolished.

Second, the British affectation of the North American accent. This is so ubiquitous in British rock that when a band there doesn't sing in such a way—such as with SHAM 69 or THE STREETS—or even sing in such a way on a single track—as with THE SMALL FACES "Lazy Sunday Afternoon," THE WHO's "Dogs Pt II" or THE ROLLING STONES "Where the Boys All Go" it is big news. The meaning is fairly obvious of course. The British, despite their ribald ways and delightfully slutty society, are still reeling from the hypocrisy of the Victorian Age and it's institutionalised prudery. The Britisher, though carnally liberated in comparison to his North American counterparts, is consumed by a desire to break from the grip of a supposed frigid inheritance, courtesy of the Ice Queen.

Due to nascent cultural memories of two successive generations of rampantly whoring US armies stationed on his and her homeland and fornicating with anything that moved, he equates the American—unconsciously—with virility and uncomplicated "shagging."

Therefore the North American accent as practiced by the Britisher is an attempt to free himself of Victorian prudery. It is a disguise that allows them, via the gyrations of their favorite popstar, to strut their inner lech. Since the British are responsible for so much of the dire inequities of the modern world—including the creation of the Middle East, with all its fake countries, fated to eternal war with one another—can we let them off the hook so easily?

No.

The fake American accent must be abolished along with the Brits free pass to easy carnality. ©

Why does fiction matter? After putting out book after book, five altogether, the question still makes me wonder. What writer hasn't sat staring down at the emptiness of the blank white page and thought: in the vast configuration of things, how do these words, these characters, these imaginary places, these stories mean anything to anyone other than me? And what's the role of the fiction writer in a world that seems content to spin directly off its axis, as an unjust war carries on, and as printed books become the vinyl records of our day? The answers, not surprisingly, are often found in the work of another author, whose writing challenges, presents surprising perspectives, and asks the kind of questions that resonate long after the last page is read.

T Cooper is that kind of writer exactly. Her two novels, *Some of the Parts*, published by the independent Akashic Books in 2002 (full disclosure: Akashic partners with PP to publish the Punk Planet Books line) and *Lipshitz Six, or Two Angry Blondes*, published by the corporate press Dutton in March 2006, pose wonderful questions about the problems of identity. Her complex characters try to decipher answers in a puzzling world of family, gender, and sexual orientation. In addition to her fictional work, she is co-founder of the drag-king group, the Backdoor Boys, and a contributor to the New York Times. Her newest project is co-editing *The Fictional History of The United States with Huge Chunks Missing* (Akashic), an anthology of inspired, imaginative short stories that detail the secret past of this great nation, as written by the losers of our shared history.

I sat down to have a conversation with T about our experiences as authors, the realities of writing today, and how we each approach our craft.

Interview by Joe Meno

Why follow up two novels by editing an anthology?

Well, I worked on it with Adam Mansbach, my coeditor, who did all of his books with corporate presses, but he's done a lot of short pieces for Akashic with their anthologies and the *Bronx Bi-annual*. I met him in graduate school and a couple of summers ago we were talking about how fucked up everything was politically, and what you can do as an author, writing fiction, if anything. We came up with the idea of the anthology to respond to the volume of lies we're being

told on a daily basis are being turned into history very quickly, history without any narrative or any reasons about why anything happens.

Immediate mythology.

Yep. It was in the wake of thinking about what the world now would look like in the future, in history books, that we came up with the idea of a fictional version of Howard Zinn's book *The People's History of The United States*. We tried to get the writers we queried to think about the losers of history and the stories that aren't ever told. We wanted it to be from the founding of the country to the present, even the future, and we got that—short stories and some graphic pieces. Everyone in the book has had a novel published and is pretty well-known. The book is organized chronologically, so we called it *A Fictional History of The United States with Huge Chunks Missing* because there are huge chunks missing, and we think the chunks missing are as much a part of the story as anything else. I guess what we're asking is, "Can fiction be political without being bad instantly?" Because a lot of time, once you feel like fiction is political it instantly sucks.

Why do you feel like that?

It happens when you know instantly what the author's leanings are.

Right. Instead of being a story, it becomes a rant. Or instead of the characters being complex and having some really interesting motivation, they become a stand-in for the author, preaching from a soapbox.

Yes. And that's when it becomes instantly flat. I don't want to read it anymore. So that was our only guideline for the anthology. The minute the story feels political, then we're done. So what we have in the anthology are stories like Kate Borstein's story about Huck Finn after the Civil War, and how he goes to New Orleans and becomes a transsexual hooker turning tricks for Confederate generals. I love that because it's playing on these real characters from our country's mythology. He's like a stand-in for that whole era of bullshit nostalgia. Everything's like that in the book, from manifest destiny to my story about the Lindbergh baby kidnapping.

Does that story have anything to do with your second novel, *Lipshitz Six, or Two Angry Blondes*? Because there are a lot of Lindbergh references in there.

No.

Wait, it's a different Lindbergh story? What is it with you and the Lindberghs?

I don't know. I really love aviation. I'm really nerdy about stuff like rail history and transportation. I think I'm like slightly autistic. You can put an aviation book in front of me and I will just flip through it. Lindbergh is really fascinating to me because he was almost an idiot savant. All these other pilots were dying trying to cross the Atlantic with big planes, two wings, not enough fuel, and two people. Lindbergh was so terrible at everything else, really miserable, but he figured out how to do that one thing.

That's what's fascinating about him. Here he is, an anti-Semite . . .

Who's a total hero.

That's the problem with fiction that's trying to make a political statement. A lot of the time it loses complexity. That's what's so fascinating with people like Lindbergh and Washington and Jefferson, any of these "heroes" of American mythology: there's failure there, there's a darkness, which is ultimately very humanizing. For me, that's where the best stories come from: an investigation of human complexity.

And I think going in and flushing that kind of story out is inherently political. It gets rid of flatness and that two-dimensional bullshit. I think fiction writers are better able to address that than non-fiction writers. The whole the *lie that reveals the truth* thing—it's those best kind of lies that can get in and really give the larger truth.

So the anthology is all done?

Yep, we're setting up a tour for it in late August. It's mostly just Adam and me, but we're hooking up with different contributors along the way.

The idea of touring is so fundamentally important to publishing but it took me a while to figure it out. When my first book, *Tender as Hellfire*, came out, I had no idea how necessary it was.

What year was that?

1999. St. Martin's put it out. I was 24. My publicist wouldn't return my calls because I was totally unknown. With my second book, *How the Hula Girl Sings*, on HarperCollins, I was a little more savvy. I figured out how to set up readings, but my publicist said, "No one wants you to read at their stores." Then I'd call all the different stores in town and they'd be like, "We'd love you to come." It took me some time to figure out that as the author you have

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In conversation with Joe Meno

T. cooper

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this responsibility to promote the book yourself, because a publicist at a corporate press is only going to focus on the established talent there. It took me until my third book, *Hairstyles of the Damned*, to realize that if I wanted to get a review in San Francisco or Portland or Seattle newspaper, I'd have to go there myself.

I think I knew right off the bat. I did a lot of couch surfing, DIY touring with the performance group I was in, before my first book ever came out. I was also a little older. I guess it came out when I 29.

Yeah, that is pretty old, T. [Laughs.]

Yeah, but you were a baby. And the thing is, those corporate presses are there to make money, so of course you probably thought that they had to know what they were doing.

Exactly.

It gives you this false sense of security, like you're in good hands. But there's no coordinated effort. And sometimes it *does* work out—sometimes whatever formula they have manages to succeed. But there doesn't seem to be any communication between this one massive department that does one thing or this other department that does something else. ¶ I did my first book with Akashic in 2002—they were nothing like they are now. I would call places and they'd be like, "Oh, is that self-published?" Akashic hadn't had a review in the *New York Times* yet. I acted as my own publicist there. I made up a name and put together press kits and did stapling and hustled.

You made this other identity so you could call people and check to see if they got your book?

Yeah, I'd be like, "This is Catherine from Akashic, *blah, blah, blah.*" And I can't tell you how many times I heard, "We've never heard of that press" or, "That book's not literary enough."

But your first book got picked up for the Barnes and Noble's Discover Great New Writers program.

Yes, and that helped a lot. But even still, I remember calling this store in Houston, trying to set up an event, and telling her my book was in the Discover New Writers program. And she said, "Oh, yes." And I could tell she was flipping through it. And she said, "Well, we'd love to do an event, but we just want some assurance that the author will be professional and not swear or be immoral or anything like that." I was like, "What?" So as Catherine I said, "Well, I can assure the author is very professional." I went in knowing, the more

work I put into it, the more Akashic was able to give back. ¶ That's how I was able to go with Dutton, this corporate house, for my next book and not expect everything to be done for me. I knew I had to do everything for myself. I knew they'd be willing to send books to places for review, but I had to figure out where they needed to go.

What was your editorial process like with your books?

I worked with Johnny Temple, the publisher at Akashic, for my first book. He did the line edits and copyedits while touring with his band, Girls Against Boys. The galley appears in the background of one of their videos—he's in the background circling something in the book.

And what about with your second book?

My editor at Dutton was amazing. I really liked her and I don't know how that happened. She really got what the book was about. In the end, I would say my book was improved greatly. After they bought it, they sent me some notes and said, "Here are our suggestions." I would say half of their line changes I took. And then there were a couple major suggestions concerning a character that just vanished from the book and she was like, "Either you need to return to this guy or cut him."

With my first two books at corporate houses, the editing was totally absent. For my first one, their only suggestion was for me to change the spelling of the word "grey" to "gray." I was so young and could have used some serious editing, someone to ask me, "What the hell are you doing on the page here?" Even with my second book, the editing was very minimal. But for the two books I did with Akashic and *Punk Planet*, I sat down with Dan Sinker, who had this very different approach. We went through the whole thing, word by word, line by line, page by page.

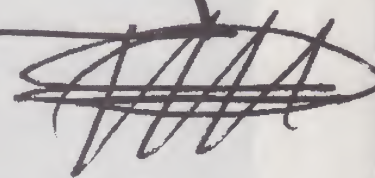
That's a real hands-on edit job. Did you like that?

I loved it. It was one of the reasons I wanted to do my new book with them. Besides their support and everything, I knew I wouldn't have that editing experience anywhere else.

My experience with my editor was great. She gave me her comments and then said, "I'll hear from you in a month." And if I had questions, I'd get in touch with her. But I have heard of other people who had no editing at all.

pull quote?

"That's what's so frustrating about corporate publishing: the pressure for a bestseller."



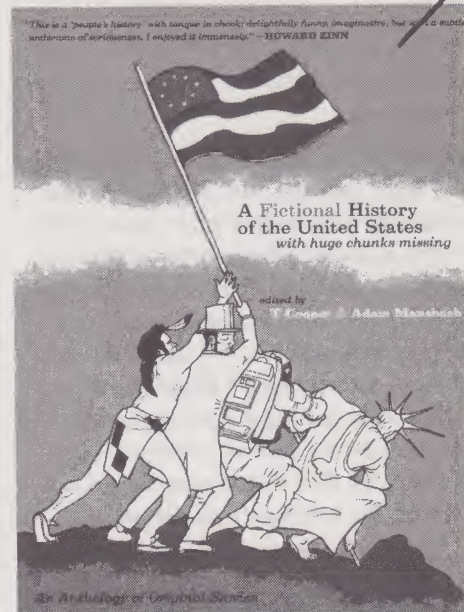
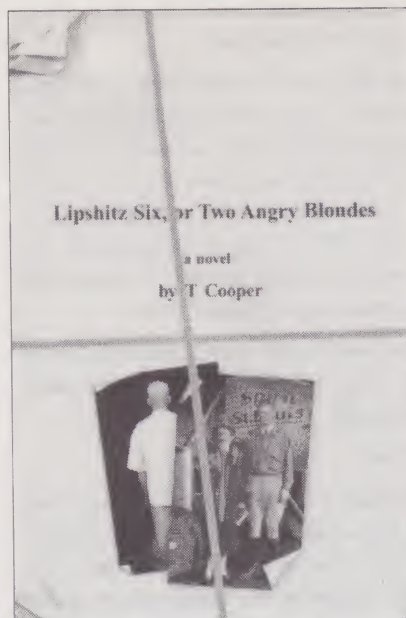
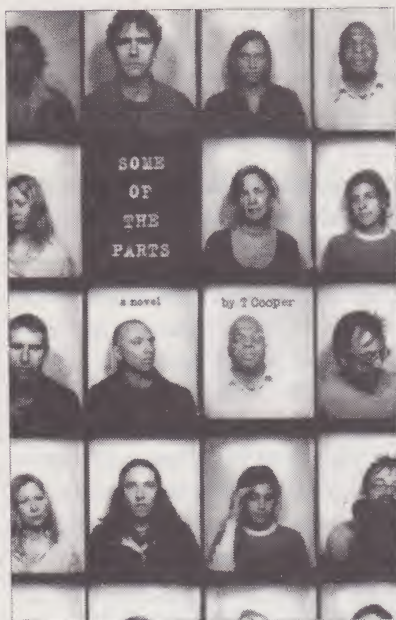
I think most writers, unless you're totally afraid of looking at your work, would love to get someone else's opinion. You sound like one of the few writers who had an actual editorial relationship at a corporate house, which is really great. Most of the time, the editors seem more like A & R reps at big record labels who go looking for talent.

Or sometimes they're very heavy-handed where they want to change the endings or make very significant edits to the story. The thing is though, I had an awesome experience with my editor, but then she left two weeks after the book came out.

That happened to me twice, too.

Of course it did. That's what's so fucked-up. There's no commitment in these big places. She went to another house. I think a lot of editors work their way up and they have to move to other houses to keep going up the ranks. That's what's so frustrating about corporate publishing: the pressure for a bestseller, like the one out of 1000 that will make it.

I think a lot of time they also get burnt out putting out books they hate. One of my editors split because of all the celebrity bio shit she had to edit, and the idea that she *had* to put out a bestseller in order to put out a book that was never going to be a bestseller.



That's the entrenched publishing model. "We need to do this crap, in order to do what our heart wants us to do." I understand that compromise though, because this world, this country, is tainted by capitalism—it's infected every fiber. So if you want to publish something, publicly, whether it's art or book or music, you're agreeing to that model. That's a question I have for you: With the success of *Hairstyles of the Damned*, how much of that had to do with Barnes and Noble's sales?

That's what is really amazing to me. We were talking earlier about complexity and complication. So even though Akashic and *Punk Planet*, two venerable indie entities, put the book out, it was through the support of a big chain corporation that my writing found a wider audience and really got out there. So it's not a very simple punk-rock success; the older you get, the more you come to distrust simple bullshit answers like that. What's really interesting is that this corporation didn't ask for anything in return. They really just liked the book and decided to really promote it.

These people at Barnes and Nobles are humans, people who are trying to make a living, but who love literature. They are these individuals who

are trying to do something meaningful within this huge corporation. And I try to remember that.

It might go against a lot of underground ideals, but just because something is produced by a corporation doesn't make it evil. And just because something is put out on an indie label or publishing house, doesn't make it good.

And sometimes the Barnes and Noble shelf is the only place queer kids in Bum-fuck can go and feel like there's something out there.

If you've ever toured across the country and seen all the Pizza Huts and KFC's and Barnes and Nobles, you realize, "Oh man, this is the only bookstore anywhere in town, other than that awful Christian one." So even though it is monolithic, they still stock Ralph Ellison's *The Invisible Man*.

And you can get queer books in the middle of towns where there's serious Bible-thumping. When I was touring, these kids would come to the events and say, "I found your book on the Discover shelf." So these chains, they obviously know what they're doing to a certain extent. Same with large publishers. Same with independent presses. But there's weaknesses everywhere. There are small gay and lesbian

publishers that are putting out crap for people. They're not challenging readers or putting out work that really could change the world.

I feel like the biggest difference is in what the ultimate goal is. I never sat down and said, "I'm going to write this novel because I need cash." I'm not going to say I didn't want the book to be put in a bookstore, but the number of sales didn't enter into the equation. So the difference, for me, is the way that corporate presses look at your book in the same way a gym-shoe company looks at a gym shoe or an umbrella company looks at selling umbrellas: It's a product they want to sell as many as possible of.

If it's public—and this is the world that we live in, based on a capitalist model—it instantly becomes a product. It's naive to think it's anything other than what it is.

But the difference is how these publishing companies come to understand the success of that product. Most corporate presses have completely unrealistic expectations for fiction. And when you look at BookScan and see the reality of the situation, you realize there are all these novels with lots of press that are only selling 2,000 or 3,000 copies, which is a fine number. But when the publisher looks at those

sales in comparison with the biography of a professional wrestler or some other television personality—someone who sells hundreds of thousands of books—your book is always going to end up being a failure.

The culture we're choosing to put our books out in doesn't value fiction, whether economically or whatever.

Working with an independent, they're very clear and open about the reality of the situation, where they might print up 2,000 copies of one of their books and if they sell those 2,000 copies, it's a success. It also seems like their goal is just to get the work out there, not amass a fortune. With *Hairstyles*, we had no intention of selling 60,000 copies. I thought maybe 100 people would get it and think it was funny. I wanted to put that book out because it was important to me. That division sums up my experience working with those corporate presses.

"I had no idea what was going to happen with my last book. I just tried letting go of the outcome, at every turn, every paragraph, every word."

It's funny because you and I are like the inverse. I don't know where I'm going now with publishing. I know Akashic and Johnny and other small presses will always be a part of my life. I have no idea what's going to happen with my next novel. But whenever I think about the beginning stages of a novel, I know I have to be aware of my motivations and intentions. I had no idea what was going to happen with my last book. I just tried letting go of the outcome, at every turn, every paragraph, every word.

That's the only way you do something great. This new book I've coming out, *The Boy Detective Fails*, is the oddest thing I've ever written in my life. I was like, "This is what I want to write at the moment even if it's not nearly as successful as my last book."

Exactly. Right now, I'm in this very public stage. I'm sure you know, there's like the writing and then there's the business. In a way, it's a curse to be good at the writing side *and* the business side. I click into this touring and publicity stuff, but it's so different from doing the writing. For this next book, it's so important I try to get the piece under way and connect to it.

Do you want to talk about some dorky writer stuff? Like, do you make any weird rules for yourself?

Like what?

Like when I'm working on a long short story or chapter of a novel, instead of stopping at the end of a section, I'll stop in the middle. Or like in the middle of a scene or the middle of a sentence so I don't have to start from scratch.

Oh, that's nice. I do a version of that, especially with my last book, which was like 100 years of history. This Jewish immigrant family's life is pegged with the events of Charles Lindbergh's life, so it was like moving through an outline. Whenever I would stop writing, after like nine or 10 hours of work, with bad spelling or whatever, I would just blab on like a half page of where my brain thought the story was going next. And it would be mess. But it would always trigger something.

Sometimes, if I only have a couple of hours to write, I'll read a little part of some book I'm totally in love with just to get my imagination going and to set the bar really high.

Can you actually do that? Say you have two or three hours free. Can you actually sit down and get work done?

Yeah, but I think I need a couple hours. I feel like it's really important to train yourself to be adaptable as writer, to write a lot of different kinds of things, whenever you need to. What's important to me is to keep doing the work and make each book very different than the last—even if it bombs, even if it doesn't always succeed. Your two books seem pretty different.

They're *wildly* different. And it's interesting when

people come to readings with my old book and are like, "I love this book," and they're clutching my new one and are about to spend 25 dollars on it, and I'm thinking, "I hope you have an open mind." I feel that way though, as a reader. I feel like if I'm on board with someone, then I'm on board. I want to see where their mind is taking them. I would hope anyone who reads my work feels that way, too.

Are there writers that you look to as models, how they move from book to book, challenging themselves like that?

I feel like I'm just starting to ask those questions now. For me, my last book was a big book and it took a lot out of me—lots of research and writing and blind faith. I had no idea if anyone was even going to publish it. But a lot of my favorite authors, like Virginia Woolf, have a similarity to the work in the anthology we talked about earlier, where they were struggling with the questions of a particular era. I've been reading a lot of contemporary work lately, thinking about that. Do you feel like you just can't read enough?

I have a huge stack of books, tons and tons, and whether I love them or not, I still feel like I have to read them.

And if I do a reading or a panel with someone or read a review, I feel like I want to read what other people are writing at this moment. That's when I feel aware of this period of literature as a movement. It makes me a little anxious, because I have so many different ideas. For this next book of mine, I went to Cambodia last summer, for six weeks. I've always been drawn to that place. So I'm struggling to figure out why I'm drawn there. In my mind, if you can tell that the author is drawn to the material, it's usually very strong, even if the book is executed poorly. I think it's my responsibility to figure out why I'm pulled there. And if I make a mistake, I make a mistake.

I think the best lesson I've ever learned as a writer is not to be precious. Even with a book: write a book and put it out there and move on to the next thing. My favorite art is always disposable in some way. Where the work—the construction—is what matters, and all the other bullshit is secondary. And you do it and just keep going and try to get better and better.

If you can do that, that's amazing. How many people get to feel that with anything? ☺

Isak: Curse of the Geek

by T Cooper

I was the newest addition to the freak show. And don't think it was easy getting the job. I got it purely on account of the geek's misfortune. Once the animal protection laws went into effect and actually started being enforced, the geek was rendered pretty much useless and couldn't get good enough at anything else to stay with the show. Sure, he tried sword-swallowing, but soon after discovered that his gag reflex wasn't as persistent as most people's, and thus he couldn't get the swords out of there when needed. Then, I think, he tried lifting heavy objects as the strong man but ended up with a slipped disc in his spine.

Anytime you asked any of the old-timers what happened to the geek, they'd cast their eyes down and shake their heads. The snake charmer invariably crossed herself and muttered something softly in Latin even at the mention of the geek's name, which I was told not to utter or pass on in any way, shape or form. It was apparently something more than the animal protection laws that plagued the geek.

But the geek's misfortune became my fortune. Although you can't really call it a fortune, or even a small fortune—in that I made about fifty dollars per shift, and one shift could sometimes entail five or six performances. Plus, this spot vacated by the geek was supposed to be cursed, and ever since he left, it never quite has been permanently or even comfortably filled by anybody else. According to legend, nobody in modern Coney Island freak-show history has been able to exist peaceably in the geek's place.

The first person to fill the geek's spot was a youngish bearded lady. But after her husband died in a tragic motorcycle accident on the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway, the bearded lady went to San Francisco and opened a gay men's leather bar called, well, "Beard." The bearded lady after her was stricken with an aneurysm that left the right side of her body and face paralyzed, and so she became a psychic with her gypsy family in a storefront in Queens instead. No one would say what happened to the snake lady who came after the second bearded lady (apparently she got into penetrating herself with the snakes, and then the act—and her life—went straight downhill from there). Then the woman with a tail protruding from the base of her spine found that she could make much more money as a prostitute, and so with no notice, up and left the show for Atlantic City.

And finally, before I came on board, there was the hermaphrodite whose family came and rescued her from the freak show one balmy summer night. So there I was.

I happened to be at Coney Island, hitting some balls in the batting cages on the night the hermaphrodite's parents came. I saw it all happen. It was the kind of night where you go out knowing something's going to change, but you're not quite sure what it is. So you blow twenty dollars smacking the shit out of little, yellow imitation baseballs in the medium-speed baseball cage and sit around and wait for the something to come your way.

I was taking a break from batting with some French fries and a Coke, when I wandered through the flashing lights of the midway and over toward the freak show. I stopped in front of the Whack-A-Mole and considered giving it a try, but my shoulders were too sore from swinging the bat.

"You're doing this to hurt your mother," I heard someone yelling, though in a somewhat controlled fashion. I became immediately interested. "Look at your mother; this is killing her."

I looked over at what appeared to be the hermaphrodite's mother. She was wearing pleated khakis and a flannel shirt tucked into them. She looked like she was from New England. And it seemed as though the father was right; she did in fact look like she could've been dying, or at least dealing with the death of someone very close.

The tattooed man crossed his massive, colorful arms across his chest and firmly placed himself between the hermaphrodite and her approaching father. The tattooed man looked back at her protectively, though I could tell by the look in her eye that she wasn't letting her parents go home empty-handed tonight. (I say "her" because that's what she was calling herself. Later, I found out that she had never had what passed as testicles and a penis removed from her body, her parents' having decided at birth to "make" her a boy).

"Why didn't you tell me?" she screamed around the tattooed man at her father.

"We did. We *did* tell you . . . Who the hell is this guy?" her father asked, clearly annoyed. "Can't we have a family discussion without this, this *Neanderthal* around? Jesus fucking H.!"

"He's not a Neanderthal. He's my friend, Daddy," the hermaphrodite said. "And anything you have to say he can hear."

"Listen, just come home. We can talk about this later. Look at your mother. Your poor mother."

The hermaphrodite stepped around the tattooed man and reached for her father's outstretched hand, but just before she made contact, the boss came out, screaming, "What the hell's going on out here? Not in public!"

"I am just trying to have a conversation with my—" and here the hermaphrodite's father stumbled on his words, for when he last left her, she was most likely a man, or as much of a man as she could manage. "I'm trying to talk to my *daughter* here, sir, so if you'll just give us a few seconds." The father's bald spot revealed its true magnitude when a cool Atlantic breeze blew over the boardwalk and through the midway. A row of pennants flapped loudly above us. The wife looked as though her knees were about to collapse under the burden of her body.

"Aw, Jeez, we got a show to put on here. She's up in a few minutes," the boss whined, pointing up to the painted wood sign advertising "Henrietta Lee, the Herm-Aphrodit-E."

"Oh honey," the mother cried. "My baby!"

"She is *not* going on. She's coming with us," the father protested. And then everyone, the tattooed man, the boss, Linus the Menacing Midget, even the small gathering crowd, all of us looked to the hermaphrodite for a clue as to what would happen next.

You could see it in her eyes: "Daughter" had been the magic word, and she was about to give in.

Still, her mother added, "You have a college education!"

But it was a superfluous final plea. The hermaphrodite hugged the tattooed man, whispered something into his ear, and stumbled into the circular embrace of her mother and father, who wrapped a feminine cardigan of sorts around her shoulders and guided her off in the direction of the train station.

As I watched the reunited family amble off, I heard the boss say, "What the fuck are we gonna do now?" and the tattooed man respond, "Give it a fucking rest, huh?"

And then I knew my something had just happened. I hated office-temping, needed money, and hell, I had a college education.

"Sir," I said, tapping the boss on the shoulder. "Sir, I think I can help." ©

Excerpted from Chapter One of *Some Of The Parts: A Novel* (Akashic Books). Copyright 2002 T Cooper.



JEFF SOMERS

Jeff Somers is a dinosaur that forgot to die. For 11 years, the 35-year-old Hoboken, New Jersey, resident has pumped out his cantankerously comical *The Inner Swine*. Each issue features long-winded rants by Somers' doppelganger: a whiskey-loving, no-pants-wearing megalomaniac know-it-all who hates his readers.

"If there's ever been any doubt that I hold secret fascist tendencies and would crush you all under my boot if given half a chance, the fact that I joined Cub Scouts should clinch it," he writes in his story "Go Away From the Light." It's a cynically abusive style that pushes readers away, while simultaneously drawing them into his self-deprecating universe ("Eagle Scouts generally go on to achieve great things in life . . . though I don't think they had *zine publisher* in mind," he later writes). Sure, Somers seems self-absorbed, narcissistic even (take the "Everybody's Talkin' at Me" column,

which publishes *anything* mentioning Somers' name), but his nebbish-killjoy persona is nonetheless endearing. He pokes readers with pointy sticks, but fills his palms with splinters in the process.

Love it or hate it, you have to admire *The Inner Swine's* stodgy perseverance. Today's *Swine* looks identical to its 1999 version (blocky layout, badly reproduced black-and-white pics), and issues—approximately 1,000 are printed of each—like clockwork, still come out quarterly. That's no small accomplishment in the quicksand self-publishing universe. But sticktoitiveness aside, is the real Jeff Somers a booze-swilling alky who pens bons mots like "whiskey dick has never been a problem. I go all night, like bull"? Or is Somers really a happily married proofreader who toils in a drab office building near New York City's flower district?

What's reality? What's shtick? *Punk Planet* sits with Somers at a NYC Spanish res-

taurant to munch garlic sausage and discuss whiskey, the Internet's impermanence, and why writing *The Inner Swine* is like a monkey on cocaine.

Interview by Joshua M Bernstein

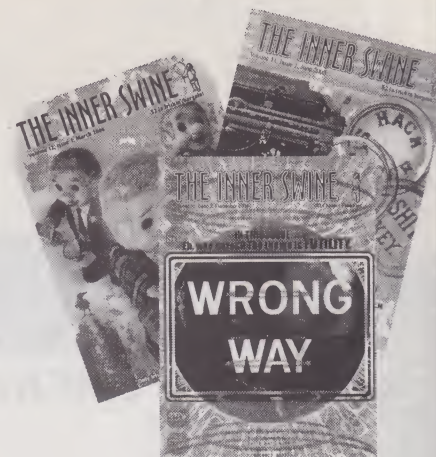
Eleven years of *The Inner Swine*! Your motivation, please.

I have an obsessive-compulsive personality. Once I start something, I can't stop. It's a sort of self-medication. When I'm 80 I'll still be printing copies and handing them to strangers on the street. They'll be like, "What the hell is this crap?"

So you'll still clack out the *Swine*, with no help?

It's easier that way. Every once in a while people send me contributions, but I invariably hate them. [Laughs.]

"WELL, IF YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT ZINES, I AM PROBABLY ONE OF THE OLDEST PEOPLE STILL DOING IT ON A REGULAR BASIS."



Do you tell them?

Not usually. I don't want to tell anyone they suck.

Yeah, especially *The Inner Swine* telling them that they suck.

[Laughs] That's the lowest pole on the ladder. A long time ago I put in the fine print that we don't accept submissions. Then I discovered that no one reads the fine print.

Does anyone read the *Swine*?

Fifty percent of my readers probably don't even realize they're still getting the zine. The inheritors of their apartments are getting the zines. At the same time, I don't try to get out there. I don't go to zine shows, advertise, or search for new distribution—it's out there, and I'm happy my family reads it. [Laughs] Let me rephrase that: I'm happy my family *accepts* it.

What do your friends and your wife think of the zine?

I don't think my wife really understands *The Inner Swine*. She just takes it as, "Oh, it's that thing that Jeff does." As for my friends, I think they just scan it for their names to see if I've written anything bad about them. At this point, if you read every issue, you would see that I've said everything three times, made the same points, said the same jokes.

How do you keep the writing minty fresh?

Hmm...I never really thought about that. [Laughs] I'm the monkey that hits the cocaine button. I don't really think about what I'm doing; I'm just popping words out there. Only when I try something new are people like, "What is this crap?" Nobody is picking up *The Inner Swine* to see what new ground I'm going to break. Part of its appeal is its never-changing familiarity.

But don't readers get bored?

Yeah, my mailing list will probably wither away until there are only 50 hard-core people left . . . I can't believe anybody pays for it. *The Inner Swine* is a hard-to-define zine. It doesn't really have a subject matter. It's not a skate zine, it's not a music zine...

I think it has a subject matter: grandpa's angry whiskey rants.

[Laughs] I'm not a grandpa yet.

Yeah, but you write like an old curmudgeon.

Well, if you're talking about zines, I am probably one of the oldest people still doing it on a regular basis.

In your old age, what compromises have you had to make?

I can't steal copies from work anymore; I'm in an office with five people, so I don't have camouflage. I used to work in an office with hundreds of people, and I could go to a dozen copiers and pretend to be copying things for work. Now I have to pay, like a real adult. You have to face reality. Making zines at work and getting fired at 22, when you have three roommates and no responsibility, is different than when you're 35 and married. What, am I going to come home from work and tell my wife, "Honey, I got fired for making a bunch of zines at work."

So is it worth the cost? Wouldn't it be cheaper to retreat to the web?

No, I shy away from the Internet: it's impermanent. Ten, 20, 30 years from now, you don't know if your web server will still have your information. Those splash pages, those HTML pages might be unreadable to the next generation's computer users. Printed technology has survived thousands of years. There's a

chance—a slight chance, anyway—that, in 50 years, someone could find my zine at a library and read it. When I'm dead, who will pay my hosting fee?

The better question is: Who will visit your grave?

Do you want to pour brandy on my tombstone?

Think you're brandy-worthy?

Jameson? Or is that still too expensive? How about Old Grandad?

You're getting there. Why should I waste good whiskey?

Well, if by pouring it into the ground makes it magically appear in the afterlife, then it's OK.

What does the next decade hold? Maybe updating the *Swine's* high-school-freshman graphic sensibilities?

That would fall under the category of work, which I don't want to do. If people can read it, that's good enough for me. Anyway, all mistakes are built into the joke that is *The Inner Swine*: Ha ha, I drink a lot, I don't know anything, so now I'm going to say something ill-informed and completely idiotic. But if you call me on it, then my excuse is, "Oh, I drink a lot! I don't know anything!" I can always fall behind the, "Where are my pants?" joke.

That never gets old.

Never. [Laughs] It's a joke that, the first time you tell it, it's not really funny. The second time, not funny. The third time, definitely not funny. The fourth through 50th time, not funny. The 51st time, it's funny! But really, it's a certain cowardice I hide behind. If anybody ever takes anything too seriously, I just say, "Hey, it's a joke! It's *The Inner Swine*! It's your problem." ©

A LITTLE LIBERAL ARMY: The Inner Swine Wants Your Children

By Jeff Somers

Pigs, the Duchess and I had the following conversation the other day—actually, we have this conversation every few weeks, in some variation or other (just like the “You aren’t seriously going to drink the *entire* bottle” conversation and the ever-popular “I told you not to drink the *entire* bottle” conversation, all staples of our interaction):

THE DUCHESS: Do you ever want kids?

ME: What?!? Uh, excuse me, I, uh, have to, uh—

THE DUCHESS: I don’t want kids. Stop climbing out the window. We’re on the third floor. You’ll hurt yourself.

ME: Ken West removed my ability to feel pain decades ago. OK, you don’t want kids. I don’t want them either. Smelly, bratty little things. I’d much rather have cats.

THE DUCHESS: But who will take care of us when we’re old?

ME: What?

THE DUCHESS: When we’re old and frail, and can’t do things for ourselves. Who will take care of us, if we don’t have children to guilt into doing it?

ME: My fans . . . [the Duchess dissolves into laughter.] That is not funny. Mark my words: There will be an army of fans here when we are old, cooking and cleaning for us. I am a National Treasure.

THE DUCHESS: No, seriously. Here’s the scenario: You drink two six packs in the bathroom from your hidden stash after I’ve spent all day searching for your hidden bottles and throwing them away, then you fall down the stairs and end up trapped under a heavy bookcase. I see you, shake my head, and go out shopping. Who’s going to nurse you back to health?

ME: [Thinking.] I assume in this scenario the answer will never be you.

THE DUCHESS: That is correct.

ME: And from previous conversations I assume the answer will also never be monkeys.

THE DUCHESS: Also true.

ME: Hmmmm . . . then there will only be one choice for us: We will have to purchase children from someone else.

THE DUCHESS: Not just make our own? That’s free, and more fun.

ME: Well, not free, unless you think we can chain them up

in the crawlspace and keep them feral while training them in elder care.

THE DUCHESS: I see.

ME: And if we raise them, then by the time we’re old and infirm they’ll be grown and in the prime of life, and there’s no guarantee that they’ll choose to spend their glory days cleaning and feeding us. No, the best strategy is to time it better: acquire the kid before we start to slide, spend a few years investing in their education and training, and when we’re finally decrepit they’ll still be young enough to depend on us financially and not have any other choice.

THE DUCHESS: You’re a genius!

Well, that last line may have a bit of poetic license involved with it, but that doesn’t matter. The point is: a desire for a guaranteed caretaker is a terrible reason to breed. And although the two concepts have almost nothing to do with each other, I’m going to now indulge in one of my famous twists of logic and ignore that and act as if what I’m about to write has much to do with what I’ve already written, because we’re only on page two of this mother and I’ve got 60 goddamn pages to fill every three months and the pressure is constant and wearing and I will write incoherent essays any time I want. And drink an entire bottle of bourbon doing it. And then throw up all over myself on the subway and sit next to you. So there.

Anyhoo.

What I was about to say before the blackout was that there are probably more *bad* reasons to breed than good ones. Don’t get me wrong: Many people have children for perfectly sound reasons, and I’m not anti-family. I was produced by a family, actually; your typical (I think) nuclear-type family with Mom and Dad and two brothers who spent their childhoods trying hard to kill one another. I gladly stipulate that having kids is natural and necessary and healthy. The fact remains that a significant number of people seem to make the decision to breed for bad, bad reasons, and I am the only one, apparently, brave enough to reveal this to the waiting world. ©

Excerpt from “Pig In Shit #44: A LITTLE LIBERAL ARMY: The Inner Swine Wants Your Children”, The Inner Swine Volume 12, Issue 3, September 2006. Copyright 2006 Jeff Somers.

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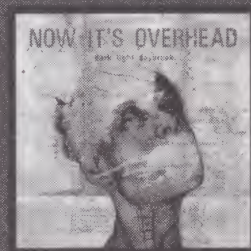
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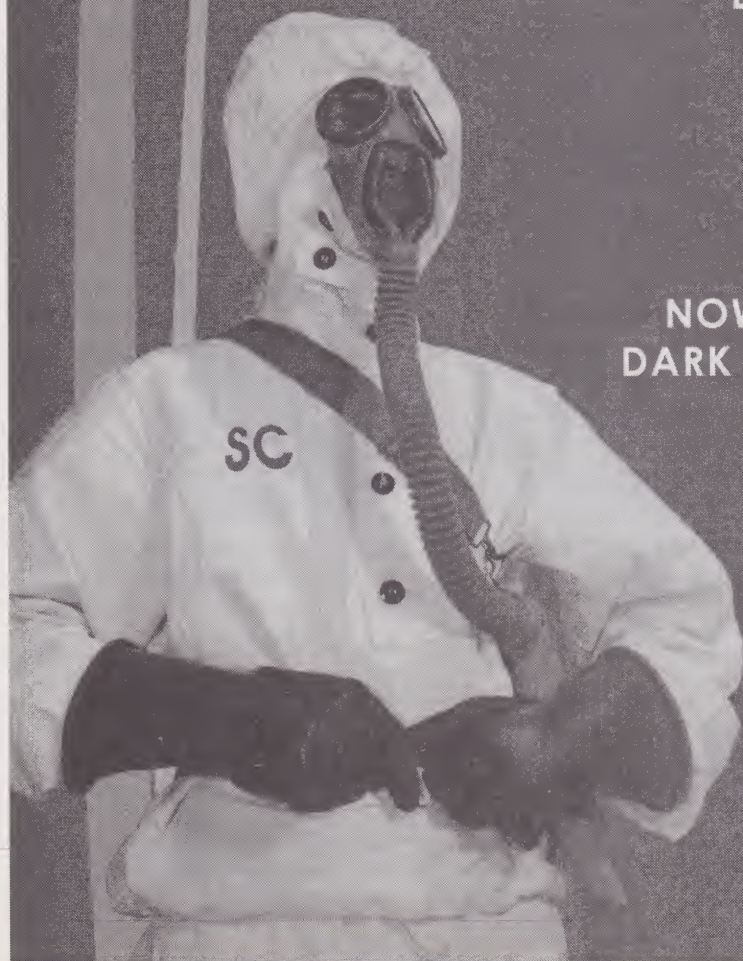
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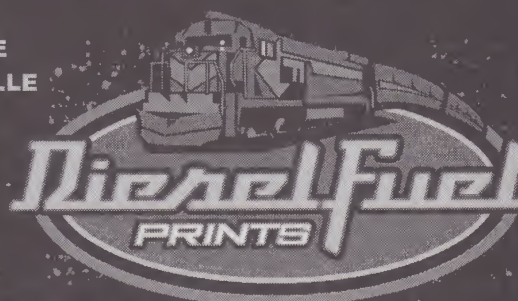
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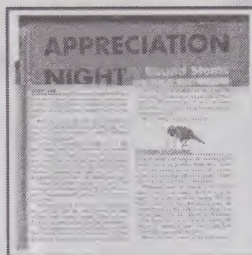
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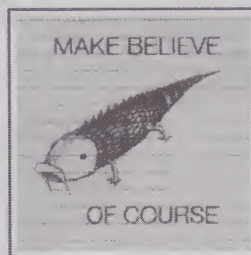
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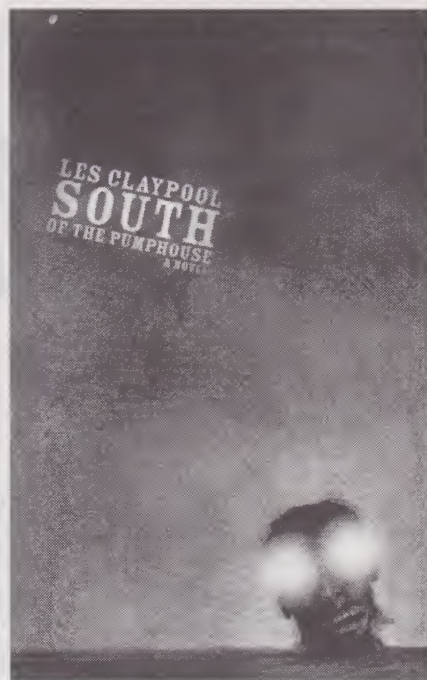
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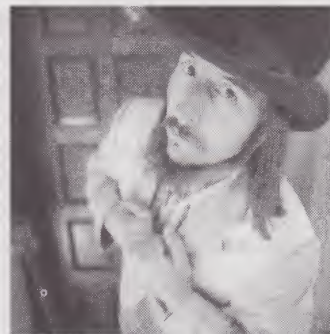


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UNOFFICIAL HISTORIES: ZINE AND EPHEMERAL PRINT ARCHIVISTS

Close on the heels of the very first zines came a slew of official, published, historical retellings of their origins. While these treatises have served to bring new creators to the form, they have also defined and prescribed what zines have been and can be. No lesser foe to creativity than Frederick Wertham, in fact, wrote the first definitive history of self-published booklets as a follow-up to his infamous 1954 *Seduction of the Innocent* with 1974's *The World of Fanzines*. Since, countless academic treatises have described, popularized, and provided instructional material for entering the world of fanzines—which most of the underground stumbled into by happenstance: photocopying little writings they trade with their friends, leave at shows, or send through the mails.

While some new creators may enter the fray after getting a book about zines from the Barnes and Noble, these academic treatises are remarkable for creating that official, published, historical timeline of zinedom. This is a spectacular feat, considering that zines are created in opposition to official, published, historical versions of, well, just about everything. Fortunately, resources have begun springing up to provide the unofficial, self-published,

anti-historical accounts zines provide: the zine archive.

"Librarians in the United States are on the front line of the attacks on privacy and civil liberties," Naomi Klein told the American Library Association in 2003. "Being a librarian today means being more than an archivist, more than a researcher, more than an educator—it means being a guardian to the embattled values of knowledge, public space, and sharing that animate your profession."

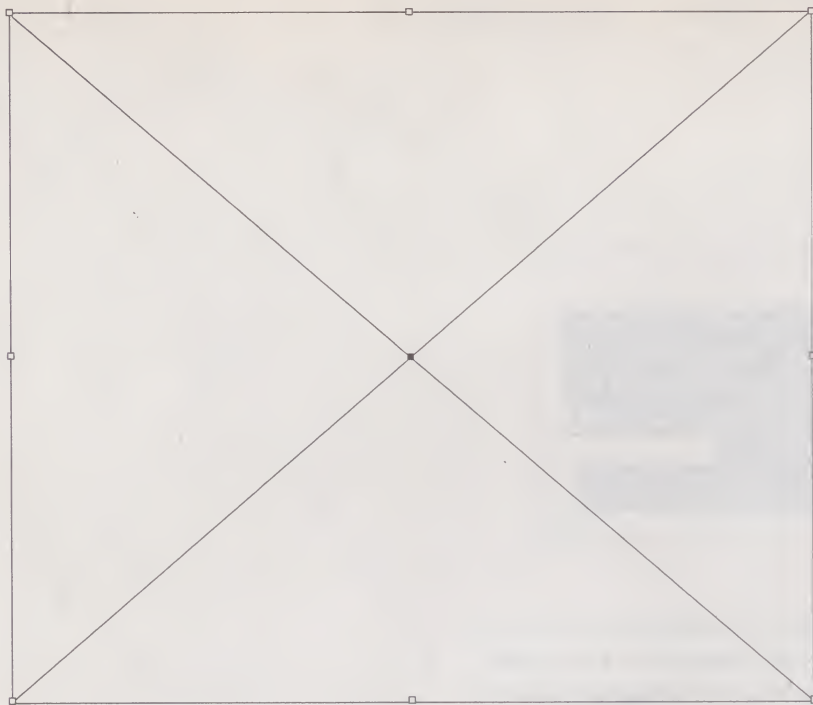
The five print archives we look at here—spread fairly evenly across the US—can rival the contributions of the average public library in the areas of knowledge, public space, and sharing. Yet they also challenge our official notions of what libraries should be. While most collections aim to house and keep sacred the printed matter they collect, Megan Shaw Prelinger (MSP) and Rick Prelinger (RP) of the Prelinger Library in San Francisco in fact aim to disseminate it, encouraging the free reproduction of their materials, whether copyrighted or not. Milo Miller and Chris Wilde at the Queer Zine Archive Project in Milwaukee have a similar policy, although geared toward digital dissemination: they provide downloadable versions of zines and pamphlets—with an ACT-UP print collection that cannot be

missed—and allow for users with home collections to upload their PDFs as well.

Information sharing is a common theme among libraries, although these archivists take the notion to the next logical step beyond the photocopying option available at most libraries. Abby Bass of Seattle's Zine Archive and Publishing Project aims to redistribute the ideas housed in its collection by providing zine-making space and materials right next to the archive. It's a model Nell and Emerson Dameron of the Chicago Underground Library have followed as well. Only Jenna Freedman's Barnard College Zine Collection (BCZC) is housed inside the traditional Barnard College Library in New York.

Yet what these collections all have in common is that they each tell stories about their communities different from the official, historical versions—as Megan Prelinger notes, "This is a different kind of library experience than is available elsewhere." In organizing such collections, the archivists interviewed below drastically rethink the ways we normally organize information—which is the first step to rethinking the very ways we operate as individuals, and as a community.

Interviews by **Anne Elizabeth Moore**



What do you collect?

ZAPP: Self-published and small press periodicals including zines, minicomics, chapbooks, newsletters, and other independently produced, difficult-to-classify publications.

MSP: Zines, nonfiction books, magazines, government documents, and other printed ephemera that serve our areas of interest: North American regional history, media, cities, urban/rural interface, natural history, and under-represented and alternative social and political narratives.

CUL: Anything and everything independently published in the Chicago metro-area since the dawn of the Chicago metro-area. We collect small press (any genre), independent magazines (any format and circulation), self-published zines, handmade art books, political pamphlets, etc. We define "published" as anything intended to reach the hands of other people, whether it's a run of 5 or 10,000.

QZAP: Our main focus is on collecting "Queer" zines. That is: zines, comix, flyers, and other DIY documents created by and for (or about) LGBTQ people and communities. As such, it encompasses a variety of materials from a number of subcultures including but not limited to trans folk, riot girls, queer punks, gay anarchists, bicycle riders, and on and on.

BCZC: Zines. Here's our official collection development policy: "Barnard's zines are written by New York City and other urban women with an emphasis on zine by women of color. (In this case the word "woman" includes anyone who identifies as female and some who don't believe in binary gender.) The zines are personal and political publications on activism, anarchism, body image, third wave feminism, gender, parenting, queer community, riot girl, sexual assault, and other topics."

What will never find a home in your archive, and why?

ZAPP: We do not accept major newsstand magazines, including publications that started out as zines and are now something else (ie, *Bust*, *Bitch*). We do not accept newspapers, free weeklies, or other community papers; in fact, we try to avoid collecting items printed on newsprint as much as possible. We also do not accept any comics from the major publishing houses (DC or Marvel). We do not collect these items because they do not meet our definition of a zine, and we believe they are being archived adequately elsewhere. As for newspapers, they are subject to quick deterioration because of the poor quality of their paper, and we don't have the resources to adequately preserve them.

MSP: Mainstream literature that's commonly available at public libraries. Because we're not

trying to be a general interest collection. Our library is an assembly of things that visitors would not be able to see together in the same place anywhere else. We think there are enough libraries with Boating and Golf and Rose Cultivation sections. Ours has sections on Utopia, Civil Liberties, Anarchism, Border Regions, and Nature/Culture Interface (among many others).

RP: Though friendly librarians, activists and zine collectors give us a lot of material that might otherwise end up in landfill, we're not trying to clone the Library of Congress and collect everything. Rather, we're trying to illuminate corners of culture and society that interest us and, we hope, others who come and use the collection.

CUL: Things from Wisconsin. Iowa. Any other states. The only exception being if the publication or author have past ties to Chicago or went on to be based in Chicago or otherwise meaningfully contributed to the growth or discourse within this community. We don't currently collect audio or video, though we've been lobbied to establish an independent A/V section and may do so eventually.

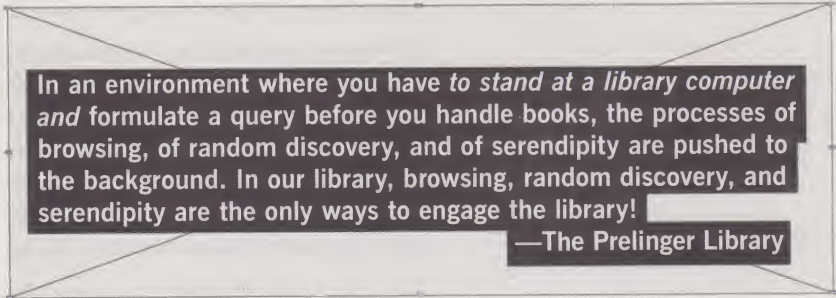
QZAP: We stay away from more mainstream Lesbian and Gay publications like *Out*, *The Advocate*, or *Girlfriends*. We also do not collect bar rags, weekly, or monthly local LGBT community papers and magazines, or pretty much anything that has had a print run of over 5000 in a single issue.

BCZC: I try to stick to the parameters listed in our collection development policy above. It's not so much that I *refuse* to collect other things, it's that it's beneficial for different libraries to specialize in different things. That way if you're interested in riot girl, you come to Barnard. If you want anarchist zines, you go to Michigan, and if queer zines are your thing, you download them from QZAP.

Do you lend media from your collection?

ZAPP: Officially our collection is non-circulating. Under very special circumstances (such as an offsite exhibit or class) we may lend items to other institutions and educators.

MSP: No. Instead, we give copies away. We have no way of tracking material objects that leave the library. Instead we have defined our library as appropriation-friendly. It's a space set apart from the climate of fear that surrounds the use and re-use of previously published works. We encourage visitors to bring their digital cam-



In an environment where you have to stand at a library computer and formulate a query before you handle books, the processes of browsing, of random discovery, and of serendipity are pushed to the background. In our library, browsing, random discovery, and serendipity are the only ways to engage the library!

—The Prelinger Library

eras for casual page capture, and to use our creaky Xerox machine whenever they like, and we have a flatbed scanner for publication-ready image capture.

RP: We also pass along duplicates and materials that don't fit in our collections to other independent libraries, researchers, and artists.

CUL: We don't lend any media. Much of our collection doesn't exist anywhere else and we can't run the risk of losing anything. Publications are available for browsing at our space and a few will be available online as PDFs with the publisher's permission.

QZAP: We occasionally lend items from our collection, but mostly to people who are interning with us, and who will return them promptly. QZAP's goal is to scan and preserve our collection in a digital format, and we make that available for free on our website. While it's a slow process, in a sense anyone with a connection to the Internet has access to our collection.

BCZC: We don't yet, but that's purely because we haven't figured out the logistics of it. Basically, we don't know where to put the check-out stamp on our little zines that rarely have room for such a thing.

How do you organize your collection?

ZAPP: Our collection is organized by general subject. We have 28 general categories (including Comix, DIY, Humor, Miscellaneous, Queer & Trans, Sex, and Work). Within each subject, items are shelved alphabetically by title.

MSP: The sections start where our feet meet

the ground, in San Francisco, and end, five long rows later, in space. It's a way of organizing subjects as a "walk" through the landscape of ideas, moving gradually from concrete to abstract, from the material to the theoretical, and from the feet to the head . . . and on to the stars. Within sections, we intershelve materials across different media if they're on the same subject. For example, we have books, periodicals, government documents, and the occasional novel all together on the same shelf if they're all about the same subject, such as the rural South, or the Cold War.

CUL: Our organization is based on when the item was entered into the catalog. This system has pluses and minuses. On one hand it helps our goal of breaking down genre and format stratifications, but it also isn't the most efficient way to browse. We're still working on a compromise.

QZAP: Currently our collection is organized as alphabetical by title.

How did you come about this method of organization?

ZAPP: The categories were developed by a group of volunteers at ZAPP. Initially we categorized the entire collection alphabetically by title, but we thought shifting to a subject-based system would facilitate better shelf-browsing. Users may or may not have a specific title in mind, but they almost always have specific interests. We looked at other zine libraries (such as the IPRC in Portland), publications like *Factsheet 5*, and considered our own knowledge of zines and

our initial impression of our collection to create a list of subjects that we felt best represented the topics in our collection.

MSP: When we were developing the idea for the library, we debated whether the Library of Congress or the Dewey Decimal systems would fit our collection. We decided they would not, and that our library needed its own local system of organization that was indigenous to the subjects themselves. I (Megan) designed our taxonomy.

CUL: We have an awesome group of volunteers made up of librarians, library students, archivists, and others who meet on a semi-regular basis to solve issues related to our particular collection. This group helped us establish our system early on and continue to work with us on adding to the data. We have also consulted with other independent media catalogers who face similar complications.

QZAP: It seemed to be the simplest way at the time that we started the Project.

BCZC: I originally wanted the zines to be classified by the Library of Congress system, but our cataloger found this to be both challenging and ineffective. Challenging, because sometimes it's hard to tell what a zine is about, especially if content varies substantially from issue to issue. Ineffective because the lack of "aboutness" leads to them all having the same call number which leads to them just being more or less alphabetical by author or title anyway.

How do you catalog it?

ZAPP: We treat zines as monographs, not serials. In other words, we catalog each issue of a zine as a separate item with its own bibliographic record, instead of creating one general record for the entire run of a periodical. In our records we try to include as much descriptive data as possible, including creator name, title, date of publication, issue and volume number, contact information, format, size, and a brief description of contents. Since the contents of most zines cannot be summed up in one category, we include up to three sub-categories in each record to facilitate cross-referencing and increase user access. We are using a database created in MySQL by one of our volunteers. It's similar to Access, except that it's non-proprietary software so we can host it on the web (our ultimate goal). Users can search on almost every field in a record.

MSP: Our collection is not catalogued. Part of the purpose of making our own library is to provide a counterpoint to the query-based mode of access that prevails at most public and academic libraries. In an environment where you have to *stand at a library computer and formulate a query* before you handle books, the processes of browsing, of random discovery, and of serendipity are pushed to the background. In our library, browsing, random discovery, and serendipity are the *only* ways to engage the library! That being said, our cherished collection of classic science fiction is an exception: it is fully catalogued. That's so we know what

we already have when we're browsing far-flung used bookstores.

RP: The collection itself is the catalog. Walking through the aisles is like touring a garden of ideas (some identifiably good, some bad, all shelved together), thinking about how different subjects connect and interact with one another, and feeling this or that book (magazine, map, flyer, zine) beckoning.

CUL: Because we use a computerized database to house and search our collection's information, we have created a keyword system to enable the most thorough searches. Each publication is cataloged by the usual things like title, author, publisher, date, but we also include multiple non-hierarchical genre listings, keywords, and an abstract. Which means that we basically read everything we collect. Our contributor list also includes not just the editor or main authors, but everyone who had anything to do with the publication, whether they were photographers, illustrators, or typesetters. The more information included with each item makes it easier to discover connections between publications you may not have known about, especially in a narrow collection like ours.

QZAP: We are in the process of moving to a database-driven system including bar-code technology so that we will be able to better keep track of the collection. When we started three years ago we had about 300 items, and we've easily doubled that. Because a good portion of QZAP involves using technology (scanning, web development, promoting free and open source

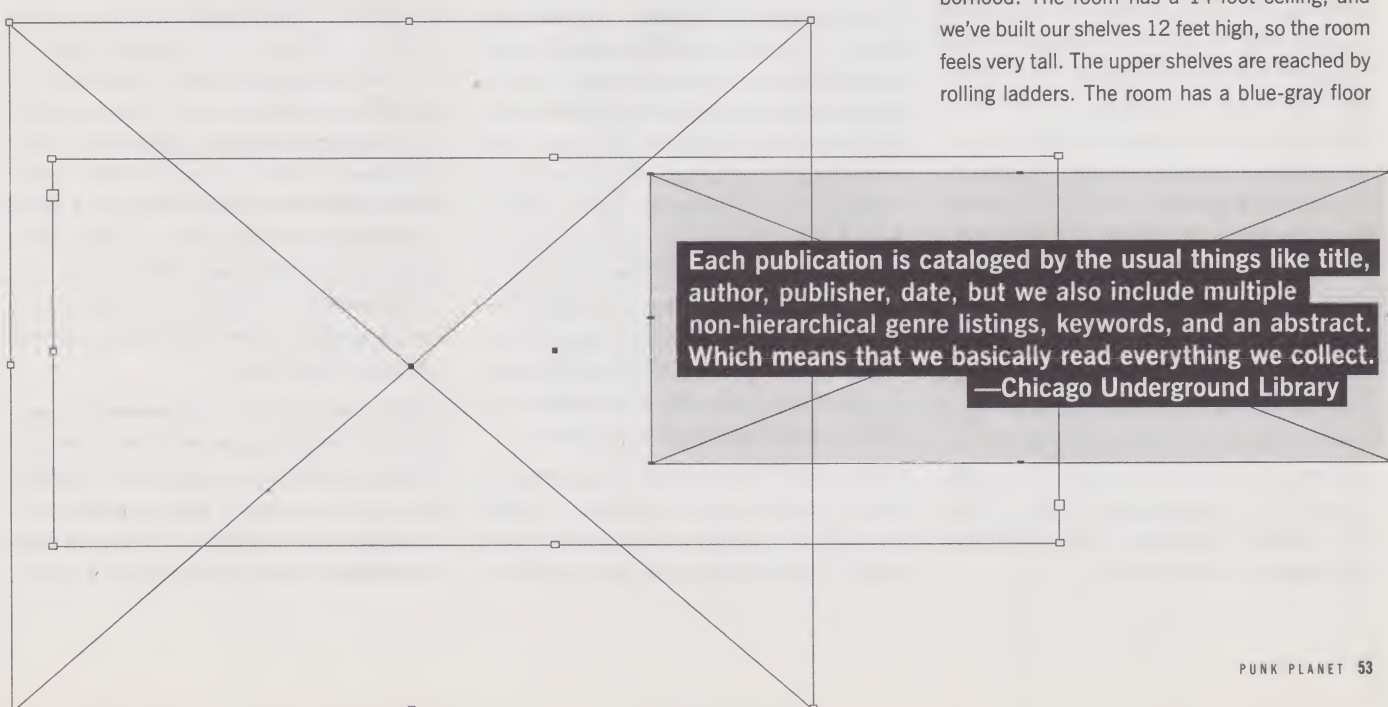
software, etc.) moving to a database system for cataloging it makes a lot of sense. We're also optimistic that our new system will easily integrate with the website, thus easing the pains of data entry from two or three places to one.

BCZC: They're cataloged according to Library of Congress standards, as detailed in the *Anglo-American Cataloging Rules* (2nd Edition, Revised.)

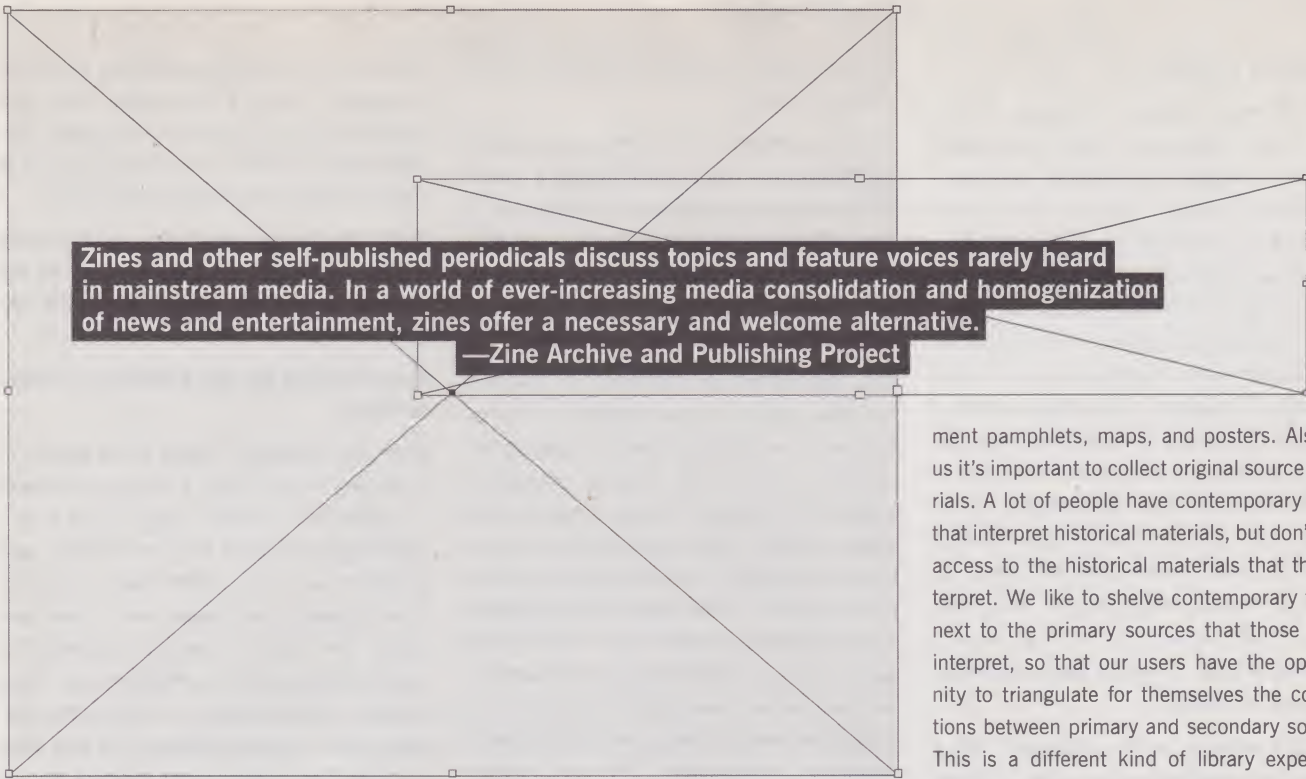
Please describe the space where your collection lives.

ZAPP: Our collection resides in the basement of Richard Hugo House, a literary arts center on Capitol Hill in Seattle. Hugo House is in a sprawling old Victorian mansion that was once a funeral home—the ZAPP library was once the embalming room! Some claim to have seen ghosts. The walls are lined with shelves full of cardboard magazine boxes holding zines. There is also an old-fashioned card catalog that currently holds minizines (although this may soon be dismantled, since it's not the best storage system for minis). In the corners of the room there are comfy chairs and lamps for zine perusal, and a big welcome desk by the front door. Scattered about the room are revolving magazine stands displaying zines selected by our volunteers as their favorites. There are also several computers, a scanner, and a printer for zine design, cataloging, Internet browsing, and other activities. It is cozy and dim and full of good things to read.

MSP: We are in a 1700-square foot warehouse room in San Francisco's South-of-Market neighborhood. The room has a 14-foot ceiling, and we've built our shelves 12 feet high, so the room feels very tall. The upper shelves are reached by rolling ladders. The room has a blue-gray floor



Each publication is cataloged by the usual things like title, author, publisher, date, but we also include multiple non-hierarchical genre listings, keywords, and an abstract. Which means that we basically read everything we collect.
—Chicago Underground Library



Zines and other self-published periodicals discuss topics and feature voices rarely heard in mainstream media. In a world of ever-increasing media consolidation and homogenization of news and entertainment, zines offer a necessary and welcome alternative.

—Zine Archive and Publishing Project

ment pamphlets, maps, and posters. Also, for us it's important to collect original source materials. A lot of people have contemporary books that interpret historical materials, but don't have access to the historical materials that they interpret. We like to shelve contemporary theory next to the primary sources that those books interpret, so that our users have the opportunity to triangulate for themselves the connections between primary and secondary sources. This is a different kind of library experience than is available elsewhere. We are able to do this because some libraries are under pressure to change the way they use space: to get rid of historic materials to make room for computing and community centers. We understand that libraries have to adapt their function to the needs of their communities, and we're grateful to the helpful librarians who have kindly arranged for us to be able to adopt some of their interesting historic materials.

CUL: What struck us about Chicago, in particular, was that there were a few communities, but they were all small and no one was talking to each other. People weren't learning from each other or collaborating or working together to solve the exact same problems they all faced. So we started collecting, both as a means to preserve the past and create an alternative history of Chicago to what you may find in the public library or historical society, but also as a way to show the current and future communities what's going on. By getting everything in the same place, you're able to contrast and compare and learn and see how other people have dealt with the issues you're facing.

QZAP: Zines are a way for disenfranchised people to connect to each other for low or no cost. In our lives this has been particularly important. As a result, we found a need to actively work to preserve the materials that represent more marginalized aspects of queer people, queer life,

and yellow walls, and is sparsely furnished with some folding tables and wire-backed chairs. There is a mountain of cardboard boxes of materials being processed that's piled in the back of the room. The room has the sweet smell of old paper.

CUL: We are temporarily housed in the basement of a coffeeshop. It looks like a basement and smells like a basement and coffee. The coffeeshop has its own lending library of general books, not necessarily independent, so when we're not open, the collection is locked away in a very large filing cabinet. The space is large enough to host workshops and the coffeeshop itself has a stage for readings and lectures, as well as free Wi-Fi for those who might work on their own publications in the space. We may redecorate the basement a bit and have already taken precautions to protect the publications from the usual basement dangers. But it will retain all its basementy charm.

QZAP: Currently our collection lives in what would normally be a dining room in our home. Since we don't actually use it for "dining" it's quite a good space. There is a nice hemp rug on the floor, it's dry, there are shelves of books and other media, computer work stations, wireless access, a stereo with turntable for listening to everything from 8-track tapes to records to MP3s.

BCZC: The zine shelf stands between the current periodicals and the newspapers and atlases in the library. It's on the same floor with the reference desk and reference collection, literature stacks, periodicals, microfilm, and computer workstations.

Why do you feel it's important to collect this printed matter?

ZAPP: Zines and other self-published periodicals discuss topics and feature voices rarely heard in mainstream media. In a world of ever-increasing media consolidation and homogenization of news and entertainment, zines offer a necessary and welcome alternative. The history and culture of many marginalized groups, including queer, punk, trans, and many ethnic minorities, are vividly represented in these publications. Zines demonstrate that anyone can publish their thoughts and images cheaply. Despite their unique character and historical importance, few libraries make a sustained effort to collect these items. By archiving zines, we hope to inspire current and future generations of zine-makers, and preserve the amazing and often unheard histories within their pages.

MSP: A lot of what we collect is ephemeral: it wasn't published with the intention of existing very long. So it hasn't stuck around too many places. That includes things like zines, govern-

and cultures that aren't represented by more mainstream LGBT communities. Ultimately, though, all of the material in our collection is representative of another person. As such, I think that for those of us who actively work on the project that these *people* have merit. As a result their work (published material) is important, because *they* are important to the interconnected network of humanity that we are all a part of. It is this spirit of humanity that we are seeking to preserve and make available. If in the process it connects people to each other, smashes systems of hatred, homophobia and bigotry, fights injustice, and leads to a more sustainable and peaceful planet, then so be it. By doing what we do, and representing what others do, we really *are* making a difference and changing the world. How could we not?

BCZC: Two of librarianship's mandates, per the American Library Association's Library Bill of Rights are: 1) Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation. 2) Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval. ¶ Zines are made by people who have no other way into the library shelves, because of their age, economic status, point of view, style, etc. Despite their lack of appeal to corporate publishers, zine authors

have something to contribute to the literature of our collective experience. If libraries don't collect and preserve their work, it will be lost. Plus, I love zines.

How do you pay for the space used to house your collection? What other costs are involved in your archive? How are they covered?

ZAPP: ZAPP is a program of Richard Hugo House. As such, we receive all our funding through the house's annual budget for this program. We do not pay directly for rent or utilities, but we are expected to meet an annual income goal (about \$1700) to help defray the costs of our program. We have a part-time director who is paid 10 hours a week (only about half the time she spends in ZAPP). All other labor is volunteer. Our collection of over 15,000 items is almost entirely donated. We have a small annual budget, the bulk of which goes to pay the director's salary. The rest goes to library supplies and program support (workshop supplies, instructor fees, etc).

MSP: We are supported by operating a film archive as a small business. We make our living through providing stock footage to commercial users. We also have other day jobs to supplement that income and help support the library: I am on staff part-time at a wildlife hospital. There aren't really any costs besides rent associated with our project. We do not charge any fees for use of the library, and we are open to the public. But people sometimes make donations anyway, and when that happens we use the money to buy food and drinks for our volunteers.

RP: The community has supported us as well. When we opened two years ago 60 of our friends visited over an eight-day period and worked to shelve most of the materials. Since then we've had two parties to sort paper ephemera and zines; about 75 people came to eat, drink, work and read. We've also taught about 20 visiting university and art-school classes there and picked up a little pay that way. Like many other DIY projects, we think of the library as an unfolding experiment. We're trying to let the library develop organically, and we will try to keep its structure and organization consistent with its activities as they evolve. It's been really exciting to be amateur librarians!

CUL: Right now we are working toward filing as a 501c3 nonprofit. Our space is donated, as is most of our collection. Our web-hosting is donated and we have a number of really fantastic legal, business, and library professionals who have donated time to helping us make this happen. Basically we pay for stuff by people being awesome. But of course once we're a nonprofit, we'll begin the grant-writing and fundraising process for things like a humidity- and temperature-controlled space, professional archiving and preservation materials, acquisitions, and better beer for our catalogers.

QZAP: Since the collection is housed at home, we work to pay the rent/mortgage. Other costs include printing for our "propaganda" (stickers and postcards, mostly), acquiring the technological tools that we need like scanners and software, paying for postage, and the occasional travel costs when we go to a conference or zine festival. Mostly these costs are covered out-of-pocket, or through donations. We recently were awarded a grant, which will help sustain us for the next 12-18 months, but really we rely on our own day jobs and the donations of others to keep the project going.

BCZC: Fortunately the cost of space is not an issue here. The space itself could be at some point, as the library's holdings expand, and the building does not. The most expensive thing regarding this collection was the bookshelf, which cost over \$1,000 to begin with and then another \$1,000 or so for the shelving inserts that display the zines and keep them from getting all floppy. Other expenses include my travel to conferences to buy zines (Allied Media Conference, Boston Zine Fair, etc.) and of course the cost of zines themselves. ☺

Zines are made by people who have no other way into the library shelves, because of their age, economic status, point of view, style, etc. Despite their lack of appeal to corporate publishers, zine authors have something to contribute to the literature of our collective experience.

—Barnard College Zine Collection



Ever since a friend made me a copy of *It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back* way back in sixth grade, I've been hooked on hip hop. Since then, I've grown to consider myself a music nerd. I don't know everything about everything, but I'm always eager to hear new music and learn whatever I can about it. I've sought out a number of different artists' work, but save for a small handful of resources, there's little information known about where these albums came from . . . why they were made.

Enter '80s and '90s hip-hop journalist (and nerd) Brian Coleman. Making use of contacts made previously during his work with such magazines as *XXL*, *Urb*, *CMJ Weekly/Monthly*, and *Scratch*, Coleman has put together an incredible book, *Rakim Told Me*, that us hip-hop nerds needed. With the lack of liner notes in hip-hop albums duly noted, Coleman took it upon himself to write some up.

Focusing on classics from the '80s, albums included in *Rakim Told Me* are *3 Feet High and*

Rising (De La Soul), *Raising Hell* (Run-DMC), *Critical Beatdown* (Ultramagnetic MC's), and 18 more certified gems that will run a few bucks for the original LP versions. Each album is dissected by both Coleman and the artist in question, while the emphasis remains focused on the artist and the circumstances surrounding the recording of that album. His notes also include a track-by-track breakdown of the album and how each song was conceived. Taking the DIY route and publishing the book himself under the moniker Wax Facts Press, there's already a sequel in the works.

Brian Coleman took some time out of his day to meet up and talk in Boston earlier this year.

Interview by Dave Hofer

How did you become interested in hip hop?

I moved around a lot when I was a kid. I went to high school in West Windsor, New Jersey.

It was about an hour from New York, about an hour from Philly, and I was listening to a lot of punk at the time. I think I went to my first show in '85: Suicidal Tendencies, GBH, and Corrosion of Conformity. After that show, I was pretty much sold on the whole punk thing. I kind of listened to RUN-DMC, the Fat Boys, Whodini. I've never really made that many divisions between what I listen to: it never really struck me, that RUN-DMC were that much different than . . . Tom Petty. Whoever was big at the time, rock-wise. It was all just music. That was my first exposure. ¶ I loved the Fat Boys. They were amazing. I still stand by my love of the Fat Boys. I remember, pretty distinctly, in 1987 . . . I wasn't a hip-hop junkie or anything. I knew who Schooly D was, I heard rumblings of Public Enemy, but I wasn't following it. I remember one day, driving down the street and listening to WPRB, which is Princeton's station, and they were playing Public Enemy's "Miuzi Weighs a Ton," and it just fucked me up. I literally had to

MAN

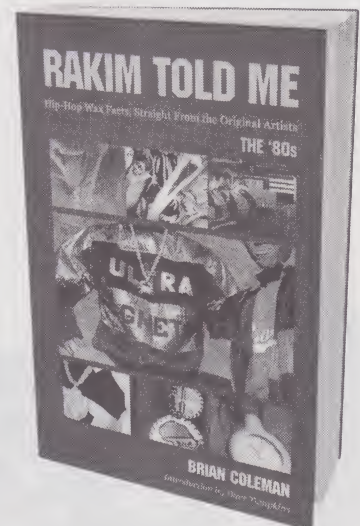
pull over because I couldn't focus on driving. To me, still, I think of Public Enemy as as much of a *punk* band as a hip-hop band. I pulled over and I called PRB and asked him, "What the fuck is this?" He told me, "Public Enemy," and that started the next 18 years of my life, just kind of exploring and learning more. I had the advantage of having DJ Red Alert and Mr Magic on the radio every weekend, as well as Chuck Chillout. I became more and more immersed in it. I always viewed it, maybe because I wasn't seeing it live, as how hip hop was put together. I did recognize some of the stuff they were sampling—"Dope Beat" from Boogie Down Productions is "Back in Black"—you realize the connections and are just like, "Wow, how the fuck did they do that?"

What do you think would have happened if you had grown up in the Midwest or on the West Coast?

That's a good question. You never know! I think that one day when I heard that Public Enemy song a light bulb went off in my head. If I was in Des Moines, maybe it would have been a Garth Brooks song, although I doubt it. Hip hop is so unique: how the production of it works . . . some bands are incredible live bands. Cold Crush Brothers were amazing live, but every time they tried to record it sounded like crap, which is tragic. My main interest was always how it was put together. It never interested me how a rock album is made. The dynamic between a hip-hop producer, an MC, and a DJ was interesting to me, how the puzzle fit. That's what a lot of my journalism stuff has been about. How the different dynamics of the people in that group come together to make that sound.

Can you describe an early attempt to get into the analytical side of hip hop?

I've always been a DJ. Never a good DJ, and never a cut and scratch DJ. I DJ'ed out. I never tried to be an MC, I never tried to breakdance, I never did



**YOU ALWAYS KNEW
RAKIM WAS FROM
LONG ISLAND,
BUT WHAT WAS
RAKIM LIKE
IN HIGH SCHOOL?**

graffiti. I never wanted to be a writer, that was never my goal in high school and college. The writers that I've always liked in music are fans first, writers fourth or fifth. I don't like writers who are good writers who happen to write about music. I went about writing as a fan, first, trying to talk to other fans rather than be a great writer, because I'm still not a great writer. It's more about communicating or explaining things. Like I said before, putting together the pieces of the puzzle. Even though it's 30 years old, there's a ton of undocumented history in hip hop that needs to be out there. There was a publication here called Boston Rock that was just a fanzine. I was just like, "Hey, why don't I do a hip-hop column for you guys for free?" I never saw it as "I want to be a writer," I just saw it as bullshit that no one else is writing about this stuff. If people heard it, they would want to know more about it. ¶ Magazines aren't really about that these days except for *Punk Planet* or smaller zines. I was always a fan of the indie stuff, no matter what kind of music, because it's always an uphill battle. I think it's getting worse today, for some weird reason. Everything gets handed to people . . . I can't even relate to the impulse to take what's given to you when it comes to music or art. No matter what it is, I've always gravitated toward stuff that you have to *find* and dig up. It makes you appreciate it that much more. Everything in all music happens because people come along and influence everybody else. I like to talk to those people. I could give a shit less about talking to TI or any of these morons that call themselves hip-hoppers today. 50 Cent is not an MC, he's a rapper. Rappers are people that just say stuff over a beat. There's a big difference.

What were you thinking about doing before you started writing?

I had done radio since I was in high school. Our high school had a radio station that was like 10 watts. It literally went to the parking lot and not further than that. I envisioned myself being some kind of radio DJ, not like an annoying shock-jock, because that's another way to expose people to stuff. I did some senior research project about radio programming and payola, first and foremost,

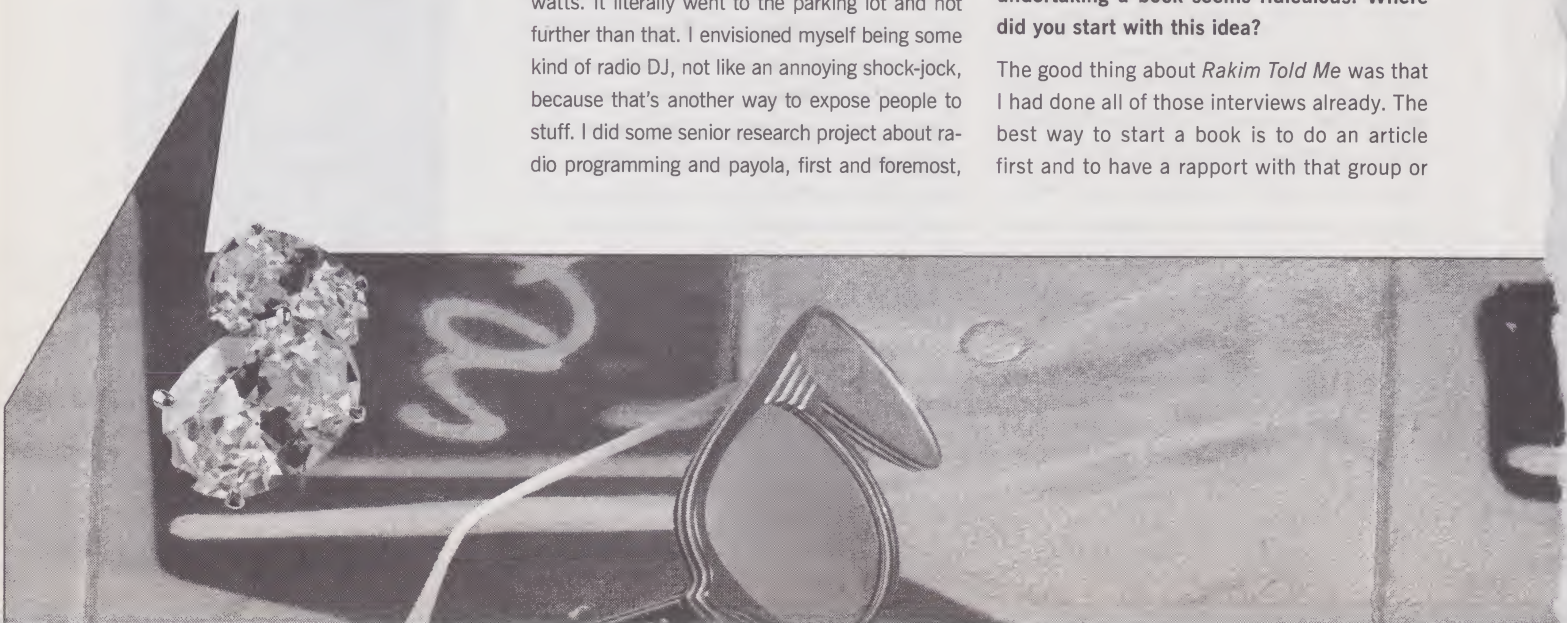
but about how playlists are made. You think that they're made from what the public wants to hear, but it's the total opposite. It's what the record labels want the public to hear. I was like, "Holy shit, that sounds like a horrible fucking job!" I knew that I would have to have music in my life, and I started doing this jazz publicity thing in '92, right out of college. I just happened upon it. I've just rolled with whatever was in front of me. I've had an idea that I wanted to be involved with music, and I knew what music I liked. It's important as a writer to find a niche. I have all of this rock and jazz that I know about, but I would never try to write about rock or jazz because there are a lot of other people doing that better. I write about a lot of stuff that people don't seem to care about . . . yet.

I've noticed this kind of nurturing trait in a lot of people, including myself, where I am always asking, "Have you heard of this?" or "You should check this out!" Where do you think that came from, for you?

People get energized by different things. Some people love to cook. I hate fucking cooking. There's a lot of shit I don't know about, but I know who to talk to among my friends, who will know about it. I kind of specialize in old-school hip hop and newer underground stuff. If someone comes and asks me what's going on with Roc-a-fella these days? I have no fucking idea. But, if you want to know what Rhymesayers are putting out or what Mr Lif or Edan is doing, I'm the guy to talk to. I don't know where that impulse comes from, but everyone has it. If I wanted to find out about quilting, my mom is the shit. That's the beauty to me in being a writer or a DJ, you can expose thousands of people instead of just a couple.

So, let's talk about this book. Sometimes, I'll come across a subject and think, "That would be fun to write a book about!" But actually undertaking a book seems ridiculous. Where did you start with this idea?

The good thing about *Rakim Told Me* was that I had done all of those interviews already. The best way to start a book is to do an article first and to have a rapport with that group or



person or whatever. That gets published and becomes your sample chapter that you sell to the publisher. The way I interview people, I could never do a 10-minute interview. I dig very deep, even if I know the piece is going to be 300 words, I'll interview someone for an hour and a half. Which is stupid, but in the end it worked out just fine because I had all these interviews I had done with not just around-the-way kind of people. We're talking Slick Rick and Public Enemy and Rakim . . . the pieces I used these for, I used about a 10th of the number of words I could have. It just seemed unjust to me, because they were all for magazines, there for a month, and then in the recycling bin. The combination of the facts—that it was stuff I already had, transcribed and never used . . . I've always felt that books were . . . it wasn't a prestige thing, because there's not a lot of prestige in self-publishing . . . but books are permanent. It's not like a magazine. A book puts it front and center. It's like I said before about the pieces of the puzzle. If you ever looked at a hip-hop album, you had no idea where this group was from . . . you could figure it out from clues, but my idea was to sit them down, in person or on phone, and ask them, "How did the Jungle Brothers come together?" or "Slick Rick, how did you get to the Bronx? How did your style begin?" It made sense that it would fit into a bunch of chapters with the unifying thing being that they're all from the '80s, and pretty much agreed-upon classics. I knew that it was a book that I would buy, without hesitation, after leafing through it for 30 seconds. There are a lot of people out there just like me, I know, that are wanting to know more. It's an informational thing, but beyond that, I hope it's a little entertaining. It's the artists talking more than I'm talking. Let's fucking talk about this guy as an *artist*! I did the 2 Live Crew chapter, and there's a lot of ways you can go with a 2 Live Crew piece, but I wanted to focus on them as firstly an entrepreneurial enterprise. They were the first black-owned independent label to go

platinum! When you think of 2 Live Crew, you think of the arrests and the shit that happened later, but that's not what I wanted to focus on. That kind of tells how the book goes. I don't focus on conflicts. If group members weren't getting along, I tried not to bring that into it. I just wanted to talk about them as artists.

How did they respond to it? Were they eager to get their stories out there?

In an interview, I'll start out by saying, "This might be a half an hour," even if I know damn well it's going to be two hours. Even then, most artists are like, "A half an hour? I don't know . . ." There's a big difference between doing an interview with an artist that you have to do and doing one you can get into. I'm not saying that I'm the greatest interviewer of all time, but once you start talking to the artists, in any genre, but especially in hip hop, when you actually talk to them and show them the respect you have for them as the creators of *art* and not just for what they do in their video, they love it. And they should love it. They should be proud! Erick Sermon, three-quarters of the way through the interview, was just like, "Man, you're just making me realize that was a really good fucking album!" They forget! They get so caught up in modern-day stuff, business and that side of things, because they've been in the game for 15 or 20 years, that they lose sight of what it was like when they made their first album, how it was just making good music. Like, you always knew Rakim was from Long Island, but what was Rakim like in high school? There's little bits and pieces that everyone knows, but this puts it all in one central location and in the book form it's there forever. Every writer has tons of extra tape that's just fascinating!

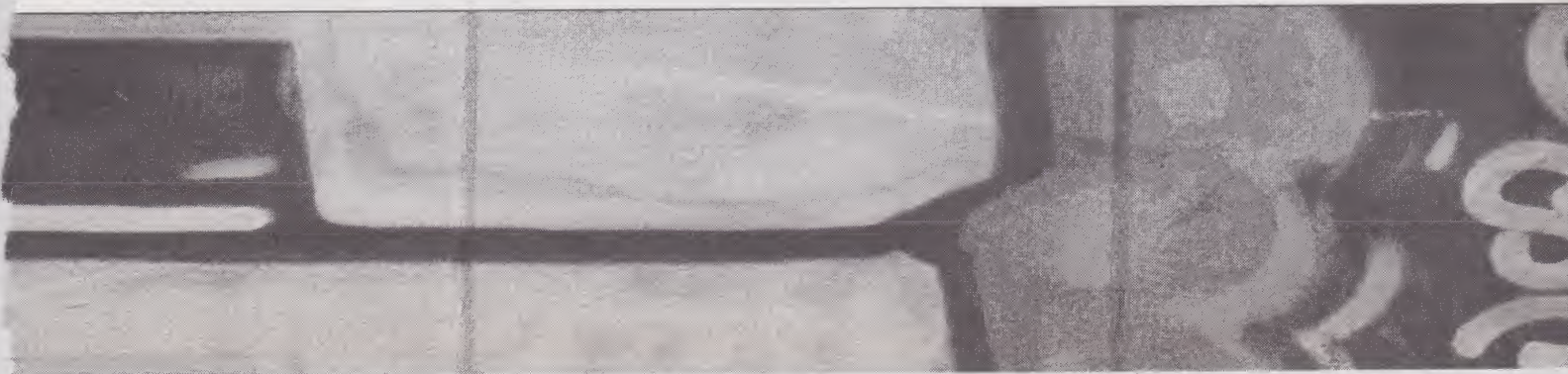
Did you find in doing these interviews that you had much in common with these guys? Not just on the level of appreciating the music, but on a nerdy and geeky level? No offense.

I'm the nerdiest hip-hop dude there is, that's fine with me. Certain guys are exactly on my level. Like DJ Premier (Gangstarr), he is such a fan of hip hop. He is such a fucking nerd and so into

it, still. After all the shit he's done and all of the people he's worked with, he still goes down to Fat Beats every week and buys tons of indie shit. He voraciously takes it all in, to this day. Certain artists you have a connection to . . . like Chuck D. I was talking to him and it was already like two hours long, and I was like, "This is incredible, he's giving me so much stuff!" He was like, "Oh, wait, I gotta' go. Let me call you back in 10 minutes, I've just gotta' drive my mom to the hospital." I was like, "You don't have to call me back! I totally understand . . . I hope she's OK!" He says, "No, no, no . . . I'll call you from the car." I don't know if it was an emergency or something like that, but he just loved talking about his music, as you can kind of figure.

Why are you putting together a second book so quickly?

There's a lot of momentum. I put together what became *Rakim Told Me* in early 2005. Because it was self-published, it only took a month and a half to turn it around once I finished it. It's still been about a year, and the book's not going to come out for a while. I started thinking, "What book would I really want to do? What book can I do?" I started looking over the interviews and listed all of the albums I had talked to people about, and it was almost 50/50 '80s and '90s. From the get-go I knew that I wanted to do both. It's always been in my mind. In a lot of ways, the '90s one has more potential to react and relate to it, because kids now don't know who Dana Dane was. They weren't alive when those first records were coming out, which is kind of scary to think about. But, they do know who Nas is. The Fugees. Cypress Hill. The '90s groups are still going strong. The Jungle Brothers aren't going on huge national tours. The Fugees are. Cypress Hill is. It's going to be at least 30 chapters, if not 40 by the time I'm done. I put together *Rakim Told Me* in about three months. This one, I'm taking more time with. I'm beefing up the interviews because I have the time to do so. It's not like I'm making any money, but at the same time, I know that I'm doing something that people seem to be reacting to, and there seems to be a need for. ©



"We made [*Nation of Millions*] like it was just for cassettes," Chuck says. "We wanted to have an album that was equal on the first side and the second side. We didn't want to have any room at the end of a side, so there would be no dead time. We worked really hard to equal those sides, through the interludes and also the timing of different songs. Because of the interludes, the album was also the first rap record that didn't go cut to cut, it had stuff in-between songs, to make it all stick together, like glue." Some of the interstitial items used were live crowd noise from a show in London, recorded on November 3, 1987. "We used that live stuff for two reasons," Chuck explains. "First, to build on our importance overseas, since we were having lots of success over in Europe, and no rap group had ever done that. But we also wanted to show people in America that we had it goin' on, with 'em or without 'em [laughs]."

A little-known fact: the album's two sides were originally the other way around, having the album start with the song "Show Em Whatcha Got," going into "She Watch Channel Zero?!" (which is side two, the "Black Side"). Shocklee decided to flip them at the last second, just before mastering. "Of course the change worked!" Chuck laughs.

Bolstered by *Yo! Bum Rush The Show*'s acclaim, no small part of which was seen overseas, Chuck, Shocklee and Sadler knew that the work they were doing for *Nation of Millions* was going to be big. "*Nation* was just pure confidence," Chuck says. "We were like 'Nobody's doing this shit here.' We wanted to build on the concept of faster tempos. We wanted to take a lot of shit over 107, 109 beats per minute. We knew our music would be faster-paced than anything out there. We knew that we could handle the speed and do it strong. Nobody out there could perform live on our level. That record was so intense that these young cats couldn't even keep up with us. We were all jocks and into martial arts, so we could go for an hour in a frenzy. It was like Mike Tyson at his peak. Because the material was so strong and because we could kill on the stage, we knew for a fact that the album would be a big hit. We made our records to tour, and we toured to make our records."

From the provocative cover by Glen E. Friedman—"We shot that in the city jail at 32nd Street, between 6th and 7th. We definitely wanted to get the idea across, that we were standing on the fuckin' American flag, too"—to every last one of the dozens of samples buried in the mix, the legend of *It Takes A Nation Of Millions To Hold Us Back* is one of the most storied in hip-hop. The album still stands to this day as, in this writer's opinion, the most important and influential rap platter ever made.

"Sometimes on the outside looking in I say: 'Damn, did I really have anything to do with that record?'" Chuck muses. But he most certainly did, and hip-hop is a better place because of it. Chuck offers one final thought, about influence and continuity: "*Nation of Millions* made [N.W.A.'s] *Straight Outta Compton* possible, later that year. The first two copies that I had of *Nation* actually went to Dr. Dre and Eazy-E. We were in Vegas and they were on tour with us and I had just got the vinyl in. That's what this is all about. Because Run-DMC and LL Cool J gave me energy. And if our energy happened to be transferred to N.W.A., then that's what this whole thing is for. Schoolly D influenced me on the first album as much as Run-DMC and I found out later that Ice Cube was influenced by how I broke shit down. Schoolly told me that he was influenced by Melle Mel. And that's just how the cycle goes."

TRACKS

Bring The Noise: That came out first on the *Less Than Zero* soundtrack, before our album. We recorded that in late September of 1987, after we did "Don't Believe The Hype." The original name of that was "Countdown To Armageddon." I got the music to it while I was on the Def Jam tour with LL and I tried to tackle it all summer long in '87. I wrote three different verses for it and it just didn't pan out for me. I just could not nail it. Then Hank came at me with the suggestion that I attack the song with three different verse styles. We were doing a show in Atlanta and Harry Allen came down, and he had a mix of it, from Hank. I listened to it on headphones and got so mad at it that I threw it across the room and damn near out the window. I was like: "We fucking failed!" I came back from tour in September (of '87) to record that at Sabella Studios here in Long Island and I still could not totally nail it. All of us plus Terminator were there at the time. Eric and Hank did all the drum programs. I brought in the top stuff, those samples. We were 75% of the way through it and I hit a creative wall, but then I pulled through in the end. At 5:30 in the morning Terminator came over to scratch, and we all thought what he did was kinda wack until we took the bass out during the mix. I love that scratch to this day, now! We learned that you can pull the bass out during the mix and there can still be some great topping. We went overseas the second week in November (of '87) and me and Griff told Terminator to put the track on, because we had an acetate. We did it and the crowd went berzerk. So it was meant to be. Flavor's comments on there, and on all tracks, were always ad-libbed. I don't think he ever wrote anything down. We would guide him on which ad-lib to use, but that was about it.

Don't Believe The Hype: When I was coming off a tour in '87 I was given some crazy terrain by Hank and Eric, like "Bring The Noise" and "Don't Believe The Hype." "Hype" came up before the tour and we recorded it right after "Rebel Without A Pause," although it didn't come out until '88, as the first single off *Nation of Millions*. We recorded that in September of '87. It didn't have a video. We said: "Why the fuck should we? We ain't gonna see it nowhere." A video was actually put together over in London because of our massive following over there. We refused to do one in the U.S. because there was no guaranteed national exposure. When "Yo! MTV Raps" came about, PE did the pilot show, in the summer of '88. That was the green light to say: "Hey, our second single should have a video." We actually originally were going to use "Don't Believe The Hype" for the *Less Than Zero* soundtrack, but we wanted the jam to be turbulent, not funky. "Don't Believe" was more regular than something like "Bring The Noise" so we just put it in the can and forgot about it. It got the eventual nod of approval because Hank went to this spot on the Lower East Side and heard DMC play the shit in his car, and it renewed his interest. The comments about writers were pointed at guys like John Leland [from *Spin* and the *Voice*] who just didn't get it. When it says "It's a sequel," we meant that it was the sequel to "Rebel Without a Pause." That song was a really big hit in Atlanta first, thanks to Ray Boyd at BIO3. I got him tickets for a show and the next week it was added. To this day "Don't Believe" is played as one of the classics in the ATL. ©

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SPILLERS RECORDS Cardiff, Wales

RETAILERS! GET YOUR STORE LISTED BY SENDING AN E-MAIL TO RETAIL@PUNKPLANET.COM

For 15 years, Cindy Ovenrack Crabb's hand-written and paste-up zine *Doris* has served as a much-needed reminder that the personal is political. She touches on concepts like anarchism, feminism, and community-building, weaving complex ideas into simple stories and drawings about herself, her family and friends, and everyday experiences. Reading *Doris* is always an educational experience, but feels more like a wise friend opening up to you rather than an authority talking at you. She explores her own struggles with abuse, incest, and depression with honesty and simplicity, in language that renders these difficult topics eminently relatable to her readers. And no matter what she's writing about, she always seems to land on the side of hope.

Doris: An Anthology 1991-2001 was published by Microcosm last year. More recently, Crabb worked with a few others on a collaborative zine called *Support*, which seeks to advocate for survivors of sexual assault and abuse. She found it an extremely taxing project to work on, but felt politically obligated to do it, as she had identified a lack of effective tools for opening up discussions on consent and the subtle ways abuse and manipulation can happen, even in self-described radical movements.

Crabb has been involved in political organizing and activism throughout much of her life; she discovered anarchist politics when she moved from Minnesota to Vermont after high school, working for three years at the Institute for Social Ecology. After Vermont, she moved back to Minneapolis, in part to take care of her mom (who she says was both an alcoholic and going insane), and in part to be surrounded by a more vibrant and active radical political scene. It was in Minneapolis that she joined her first political collective, which was part of the Youth Greens (back when the Greens was still anarchist and believed in electoral politics only up to a city council level). She stayed in Minneapolis for about a year, overwhelmed with caretaking for her mother and constant political work, and then headed west to Portland. Not knowing a single person, she looked in the newspaper and saw an ad for a Food Not Bombs group that was starting, and became involved with them, living in a house that was in many ways communal—another new experience for her. She lived in the house for about a year, but left after having a falling out (“the politics of the house just became totally ridiculous,” she says). After Portland, she moved to

the San Francisco Bay area, and it was while living there that she started *Doris*.

Now 36 and living in Ashville, North Carolina, Crabb says she's now at an age where she'd like to harness her years of experience toward an educational role. She still writes *Doris*, and has recently been involved in the creation of a health-care center for women and trans people. She's also been directing her energies toward reinvigorating the women's health and self-care movement, pointing to recent events in South Dakota as a reason for returning to this kind of work.

Listening to Crabb talk is like reading her zine—she speaks plainly and possesses a slight awkwardness that comes from being acutely self-aware. And like her zines, she doesn't shy away from moving conversations into difficult places or offering examples of mistakes she's made and lessons she's learned.

Interview by Debbie Rasmussen

You write in *Doris* about growing up surrounded by early politicizing forces but also various kinds of abuse. Can you talk about these early experiences?

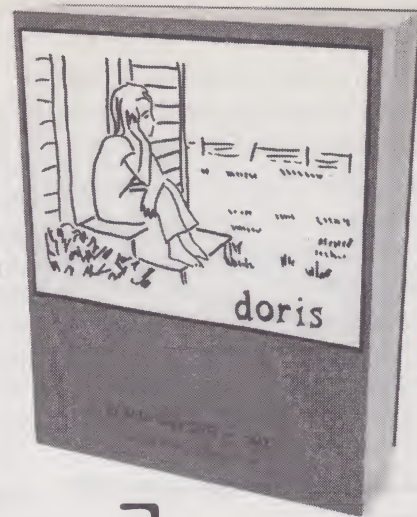
My first six years of education were in a school that was very progressive and student-centered. In the '70s, when I was in elementary school, there was funding for alternative education. I wasn't surrounded by issues of materialism, I never learned about gossiping or being cruel, and I learned about movements for social change. But at the same time, my dad was extremely abusive to my mom—physically, emotionally, and sexually. After they divorced, my mom married this guy who was a total alcoholic. She was an alcoholic, too. They were super loving, but total drunks. ¶ In sixth grade, I had to start going to public school. It was a huge, terrible change. I was such an open and loving person and I just did not understand the rules. I started living with my mom and step-dad in eighth grade. There were five kids, and not enough money. My stepbrother was a metal-head, but he started molesting me, and his friends were kind of in on it, too. So joining that group wasn't an option. There were no punks—the people I knew thought punk was dead—but there were about five weirdos, so I hung out with them.

When did you first encounter anarchist or punk politics?



When I was 15, hanging out in downtown Minneapolis, there was some politicizing, but not a ton. I had friends who were in an anti-racist gang and they talked to me a lot about racism. And this anarchist group called Love and Rage was starting. I didn't know that much about them. The first protest I saw was in Uptown—which now is super fancy, but then it was a mix between fancy and scummy—and it was against gentrification. It was 20 punks just marching through Uptown with “Fuck the Rich” signs, and all this media. I was 16. I didn't take part in the protest, I just watched. ¶ When I was 17, I took this women's studies class, and I started retreating from society and dealing with some abuse stuff. During this time there was a lot of US intervention [in Central America], and there were huge protests in Minneapolis, having pretty successful results. I wanted to go, but I was terrified. The second day, the protesters were totally brutalized by the cops. A friend got pepper sprayed directly into her mouth. It was so overwhelming to me, I just cried and felt like everything was totally pointless. I felt like I should be out there, but I also didn't want to be part of all that violence. ¶ Then I went to Vermont—and I still didn't really know what anarchism was or that you could really change anything in the world except through the structures that exist, or changing one person at a time. But I read and talked about anarchism a lot. This is when I started believing in anarchism and thinking that you can change the world and everyone's going to jackhammer up the streets and plant gardens and start making decisions together and create communities. That whole utopian vision was so amazing to me. And I just

indy Ovenrack Crabb



totally believed and was so excited about things like alternative technology and squatting.

You wrote in one of your zines that realizing that the revolution wasn't going to happen in your lifetime was a turning point for you . . .

At the time, I thought you had to do political organizing pretty much 100 percent of the time, and so I did. It was annoying to always be doing political stuff, but I was so excited about it happening, and there was still so far to go. I also had a bit of a martyr complex. ¶ Partly this realization came because no one else seemed to be working that hard. But also, I asked a friend who was older if she thought the revolution would happen in our lifetime, and she said, "I really hope it doesn't." I was confused because she was more active, more articulate, and stronger than me. But she laid it out and said that if a revolution were to happen right now, it would probably lead to an even more reactionary and authoritarian world, because people's ethics are so fucked up that we don't

have any kind of base for an egalitarian society. And it was one of those instances where someone says something and your mind just immediately switches. ¶ I had also recently read *Agents of Oppression*. I hadn't known how much state control there was over political organizing. It was surprising when our phone was tapped, you know? I just didn't understand how much power the state had to come down on political groups.

Can you talk about the beginnings of *Doris*? Where were you then and what was going on?

I started it when I moved to Berkeley, around 1993. I'd always wanted to be a writer, but I wrote mostly fiction. I was in a political collective when I lived in Minneapolis, and we put out a magazine. I tried to write political stuff for that, but I couldn't do it. I still had a lot to learn. When I first saw zines—and I didn't see them until around 1992—I thought they were amazing. *Snarla* blew my mind. She was so pissed off and so crazy but so articulate. I

thought it was great that she would write about pissing on her fingers and alienation, and that she was figuring things out in this public way, because I thought that in order to write you had to have it all figured out already. ¶ When I started *Doris*, I was obsessed with secrets. I felt like everything was secret inside of me pretty much. I definitely had concrete secrets about abuse, about family, and about abusive situations I put myself in, and also feeling crazy. I was very afraid of going crazy. I also had secrets about how beautiful I thought things were. A lot of my friends were very tough and thought everything was disgusting capitalism. And I thought, "But look at all this beautiful stuff just laying around in hidden places," and that was secret too. ¶ The main reason I started writing zines was because I was obsessed with how alienated people were. Why did we just talk about music and tattoos, or Foucault? I wanted to break the barriers of what you could talk about. In the beginning I wanted to learn to

write about political stuff. And then I stopped caring as much about that.

But to me your zines have always seemed very political, very anarchist. Just not in that hammering-you-over-the-head sort of way.

Maybe that's what I mean. Maybe I thought I had to write about issues, and then I started to see that I didn't. That I could embody it in other ways. That everything inside of me is political, I mean I think about politics all the time. But I didn't have to figure out how to write about politics, it wasn't something separate from my writing, if I was writing what I cared about, because what I care about is changing the world.

What role did writing zines play in your political progression?

It gave me courage to speak politically out loud. I feel like I can articulate when I'm writing. And it's helped my overall self-confidence. I didn't have much before I started. I think the role it's played . . . you know, I started drinking really heavily in 1995, and didn't do anything political, wasn't around people doing political organizing anymore, for probably seven years. But I kept writing. I knew the drinking was temporary, but it lasted a lot longer than I thought it would. So I think writing the zine kept me grounded and reminded me that I still wanted to change the world, and I did still have something to offer, and I could still think if I put my mind to it. I could sober up for a few days or a few weeks and get myself thinking clearly enough to write about something I cared about. So in that way, it kept me alive.

Can you talk more about your experience with drinking? What was going on in your life?

When I started drinking I had a lot of stuff going on. There was so much anger pent up inside of me and I was terrified of it, and so angry that I couldn't find people to be close to. Drinking definitely helped me process that stuff and it definitely helped me be around people who considered each other family in this way. It allowed me to be close to people and to become really angry and to sing, and play punk music, which has been good. And now, I have no problem getting angry when I need to. But I never would've been able to if I hadn't been a drunk for a while. I know other people can, but I don't think I personally could have. ¶ But during this time, I was in a women's health group, and we opened a women and transgender health resource center. And for the first time, I had the power. I knew what needed to get done, I knew how it needed to get done most efficiently, and I

didn't have patience for people coming in and not doing what they needed to do. It was very strange for me, because I'd always been the powerless one in groups. I think I was really shitty. I didn't stay in the group very long, because I could see what was happening. Out of all the kinds of organizations, a women's/transgender health project should not have somebody doing that kind of power trip. I think if I hadn't been drinking, I would've been able to handle it better. ¶ So I realized I had to quit drinking, and I moved out to the country, partly just to get away, and partly because I just couldn't take it; I'd been writing a lot about abuse stuff, and people were talking to me about abuse stuff, and it was too much for me.

Is this what *Support* came out of?

One of the reasons I wanted to do [the zine] was because I had called out people who'd been abusive to friends, and I was confronting ex-boyfriends who'd been abusive to me. And everybody really just didn't think they were abusive. Or really didn't mean to be. Or couldn't believe that that's what I experienced. ¶ It became really clear that people just do not know. So I wanted my friends to read about abuse and how it affects us and how not to be abusive. It seemed like I would be a good person to put out a zine about it. I really didn't want to do it. But I felt like that was politically important for me to do, I felt like I was in a position where I could.

Shifting focus a bit, I wanted to talk about the zine you wrote as the DIY guide to depression . . .

[Laughs.] When I wrote that, I thought people would think I was completely insane. I just thought, "OK this is what I do, but everyone else will think I'm crazy." But I've gotten the most feedback about that zine than any other.

You've mentioned that depression is an ongoing struggle . . .

Oh yeah. I mean I'm not so suicidal anymore, but I'm still depressed. How could you not be? The world is so fucked up. And I still feel hopeless sometimes, but it's less. I stopped feeling so dramatic about my place in the world, and also, yes, the world is a terrible place, but there have also been incredible changes. Sometimes when I start to feel really hopeless about things, I read about the '60s. It was unbearable then, and the movement was amazing. People thought the whole world was going to change, in a way that was less delusional than how I thought it was going to change. African countries were gain-

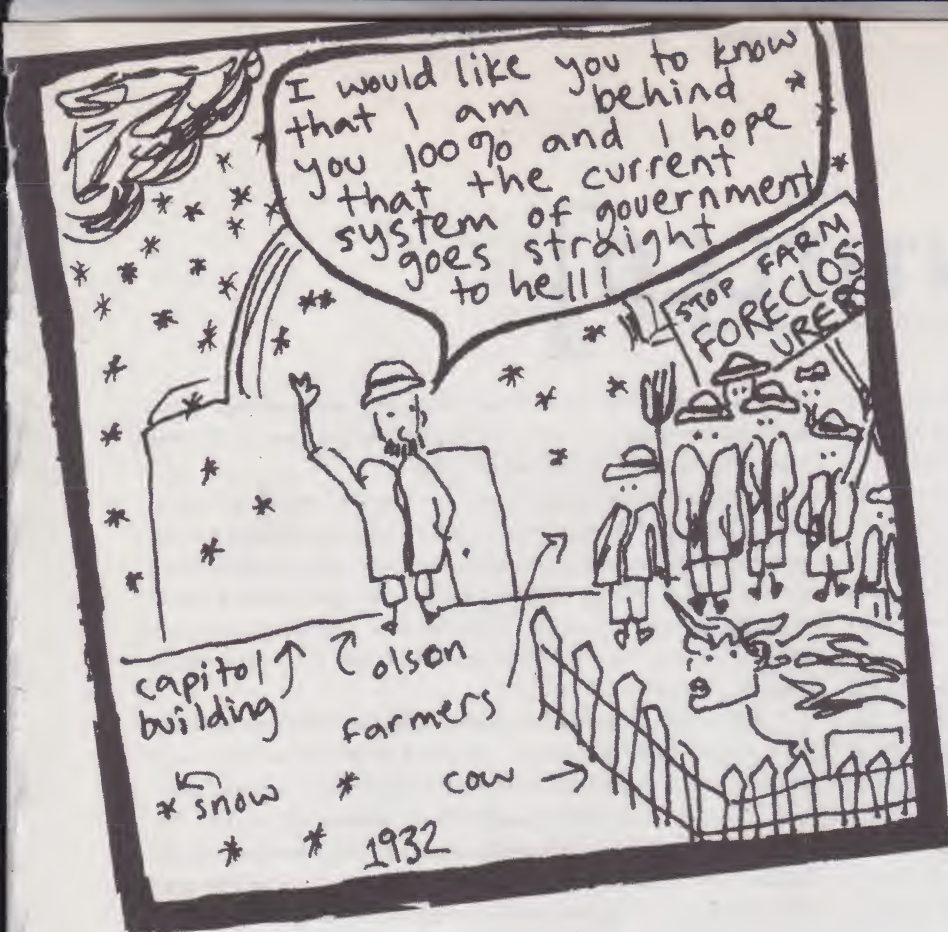
ing independence. But at the same time, it was unbearable. Women had so few resources, men were just unbelievable pigs, and that was totally accepted in political circles. So it gives me hope that we've changed so much. And I believe that we're continuing to change in very fundamental ways. Like the trans movement. A few years ago I didn't really even know that trans was an option for people. And it's amazing to me to see this fight to end the gender binary. Just that society's moving in these directions despite all the issues it brings up. There's so much social control, we're losing on so many fronts, especially with state repression, and there's so much materialism, just pushing and pushing, it's so daunting. But there's also some pretty magical stuff going on.

One of the reasons your writing seems to resonate with people is because you use such plain language to communicate complex ideas, particularly around anarchism. How do you define anarchism?

My definition is that people have the capability to live in a world without oppression and without coercive institutions and government, and that we have the ability to self organize. I'm not into this idea that we're going to be free and chaotic. Sometimes what gets called direct democracy is how I envision anarchism—communities organized together, someone can be your representative, but they come back and tell you exactly what was said at this meeting, and if you don't like it they can be recalled. I have this idea how the entire world would be run in an anarchist society, including the postal service, but it's basically the idea that people can self organize, that we can live without coercion, that we can live in an ecologically sustainable way.

How have your politics evolved over the years?

One of the things that's really great now that I'm older, is I'm able to be around different kinds of people, especially older people. My sister is part of this farmers' market, and these people are not anarchists, supposedly. Some of them are old tobacco farmers who are now trying to grow something else, because they're broke. They're people from all different backgrounds, and they might've voted for Bush. But in their farmers' market meetings they can do consensus better than anarchists can. They'll be totally outspoken in their beliefs and disagree with whatever decision is trying to be made in the group. Maybe they want crafts to be sold in the farmers' market and other people don't, and they will go off about crafts and how



**People have the capability to live in a world
without oppression and without coercive
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We have the ability to self organize.**

they should be there, and when it comes down to the vote, they'll abstain from voting because they see that it would be better for the community. I feel like I have a lot more faith in humanity, I'm much less dogmatic. ¶ I'm also trying to embrace this idea that now that I'm older, I would like to be more of an educator. Often I think that everybody knows what I know. And I'm starting to realize that everybody does not know what I know, because I'm 36 and a lot of people are 15, and I should be conscious about doing some educating, because it would have been useful for me to have zines that explained some history.

You've written a lot about group process and the replication of oppression in radical movements. Do you have any new thoughts on that?

I think when people start doing political organizing, there's this sense of urgency: things need to get done, and there's no time. But when there's a sense of urgency, there's more room for power

dynamics, to not make room for people who feel silenced, and not make room for larger discussions. So first of all, I wish people would embrace the basic idea that the ends don't justify the means. And really embrace patience and make enough time for meetings and groups to be efficient but also value the work of empowering people to speak and people learning to be empowered to speak, and formulating ideas together. And knowing that that is a huge revolutionary thing we need to do. And that even if we win a particular issue, we are not going to change the world unless we do this work.

What do you spend your time doing these days?

I've worked for my aunt for a long time as a weaver. I make fancy scarves mostly, for the ultra rich. [Laughs.] When I moved to Berkeley she taught me. It's a great job, but it's just a job. And I'm trying to write a novel. And I'm in two bands. And I'm trying to relax more.

What's the name of your band?

Trouble Trouble Trouble, I sing and play the bass. I was in another punk band before called Astrid Oto. Trouble Trouble Trouble doesn't have any music out, but for the record, my other band did. I just sang in that one. I was also in a band that I just played bass for, no singing, which was called the Blank Fight.

Can you share the storyline of your novel?

[Laughs.] It's ridiculous. Washington DC has had a chemical attack and the central government is in disarray and the economy has gone down the tubes, kind of how it was in the '80s, so there's white flight back to the suburbs and no more gentrification. That's the setting, but it's mostly about these two 15-year-old girls, their friendship. One of them is an anti-racist organizer, kind of a wild ass, but definitely 100 percent for the revolution, and the other is dealing with issues around depression, sexuality, silence and abuse.

You mentioned wanting to get back into political work. Do you know where you're headed?

Yeah, I want to do education about women's health and try to start more of a women's health movement again. Self-care, abortion rights, everything. I'm not really sure if young girls have those resources to learn about their bodies and self-care. I want to teach classes on that and physiology and how our bodies work, and how everything is connected. I want to teach this as a political action. And then hopefully working to make reproductive health clinics better. This whole Supreme Court thing is really frightening. This work is important so that when the time comes, we can take care of things on our own. I also want to do support for a group of Spanish-speaking women in my town who are volunteer translators at our clinic, and who are now helping a group of Latina women to get resources to start their own community health center. I want to be more active in supporting communities of color. ¶ And then eventually I want to be teaching. Not in a regular school, but I want to teach about history and philosophy. I also want to be more involved in street protesting again, and real education about it—giving flyers to strangers on the street. I don't love street protesting, but I think it's important that it's ongoing and not just when major issues that come up. I want to work up to doing all that stuff, helping more counter-institutions, organizing meetings, making sure the meetings have good process. I feel like I'm at that age when that should be my role. ◎



[UNTITLED]

By Cynthia Ovenrack Crabb

In Minnesota, people don't touch, not unless it's like this: my girl skin undressed, kisses and friction. Sometimes the boy will hold me then, but I don't expect it anymore. He turns his back towards me. He falls asleep. I could try and wrap myself around him but my body's too small. I could stare at the ceiling, waiting. I could turn on my side, the small of my back to his; sometimes even this small touch is a comfort. I could wish and cry and wonder. I could put on my clothes and leave; and this is what I almost always do now, I leave.

Underwear, long underwear, socks, jeans, I lace up my boots. He reaches out, half heartedly, I move away with half a heart. His tee-shirt, my tee-shirt, sweater, jacket, gloves. I make my way in the dark, through the clutter of bottles, boxes, clothes and paints, to the door, down the staircase, broken glass, the skuttle of a rat.

I open the door to the outside, the wet air and wind, the noise rushing at me. It's closing time at the bar, and everyone's stumbling to their bikes or walking home holding hands, holding each other up, fighting, yelling. The wet air clings to everyone like a fog. The snow and slush is melting even this late at night — it is barely even snow anymore, just half frozen dirt crystals melting back into the ground, back into the asphalt, running to the gutters, through the sewers, into the river — the Mississippi.

Patience leans over her bike, locked at the lamp pole down the street from the rest. She's got a pink bunny eared hat on, yellow rain pants, golashes, white leather jacket with the broken heart stencil. She is swaying, one eye closed, one eye squinting an inch from her bike lock; clumsy mittened hands trying to turn the dial. She steps back and kicks out at it and then sees me approaching.

"Betsy, Betsy, Betsy!" she says, "Do you have a flashlight? I can't see a thing." She is looking past me, then looking at her golashes. This is what I love about Patience tonight: the practicalness of the lower half of her wardrobe.

She is mumbling about street lights, in that slow drunk way that rises to a shout. "We don't need them, I know we don't need all of the m, but goddamn it, sometimes you just need a fucking street light!" She shakes her fist at the smashed out light bulb, stumbles back, yells "Goddamn you Tony!"

Tony is a one man electricity conservation enforcing machine, and aside from systematically smashing out approximately 4 out of every 5 light bulbs in the city, he also does commando raids to the suburbs to steal solar panels from the road construction sights where the suns power is stored in little black boxes so they can keep the flashing arrows flashing, *merge right, lane closed*, flashing all night. Sun, filtered through the panels, converted into the transformer, held there so they can light up the street, brighter than nature, after the

daylight is gone, they can still keep the paving trucks paving, or the jackhammers jacking, or whatever it is they do out there in the ever expanding flee from these doomed cities.

"Yuppie artist flight" Tony says when he explains to anyone who does or doesn't want to hear about why all the up and coming urban renewal was abandon, why our neighborhood was left half demolished, half rebuilt. "No one wants to invest in cities anymore," he says, "The romance is over. It is all pre-programed fear; as if foreign nations really give a shit about bombing Minnesota."

Tony calls any substantial group of people a "foreign nation." He is sick of the word terrorist. He is sick of the way countries and borders got decided by their oppressive, exploitative colonial masters. This is how he talks to people, little lectures all the time. He is a walking history machine with strange inside jokes that only he knows. I, for one, almost never understand what the hell he's really talking about, unless he's lecturing me about something I already know, and sometimes I just can't listen to him, like when he tried to tell me about corn.

I miss the cornfields. I went out there with him once, past the suburb I used to live in. I waved to my little brothers, a secret wave. They couldn't see it of course, but maybe they'd feel. We drove past the new developments, out to the cornfields that are slated for bulldozing.

It was a fall night, warm. I walked in my shirt sleeves into the rows of drying stalks whispering. Corn leaves will scrape your skin, but the fields do not close in on you like they do in so many horror movies, where they are the symbol of terror; a girl escapes a moving car and flees into the cornfield with the killer or rapist chasing after her and the girl thrashes through a maze of corn, *which way is which? Which way is out?* Cornfields are not like that. An East Coast person must have made those movies, someone who has never experienced flatness—the long vision of a frozen-over lake, snowdrifts that make the world seem tunneled, 30 degrees below, exposed skin warnings, quick waves from strangers who acknowledge you simply because you too had the courage, the need or the nerve to come out of the house and brave this cold.

When I walk into the cornfields, my vision straightens, I am pushed down into myself. The cornfields give you a path you can walk down forever. And I want to walk and walk, and empty and empty, and breathe in only this dry corn air. And then I want to run, to feel the leaves cutting against me. Maybe this is what they are afraid of: this simple desire, this need to run.

Only a Midwesterner understands what winter is. Only a Midwesterner understands corn. ©

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SECRET

**GET ONE YEAR OF
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In 1967, activist historian Howard Zinn published *Vietnam: The Logic of Withdrawal*. The book played a role in sparking a national debate over the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the United States from Vietnam. In the book, Zinn drafted a withdrawal speech for President Johnson: "We have made an important decision," he wrote. "It is based on a fundamental American belief that human life is sacred, that peace is precious, and that true power does not consist in the brute force of guns and bombs, but in the economic well-being of a free people."

In 2002, when Anthony Arnove was working as an editor for South End Press in Cambridge, Massachusetts, he took on the task of revisiting and republishing Zinn's long out-of-print argument for US withdrawal from Vietnam, an argument only heeded after many more years of a horrendously brutal war that ultimately expanded into Laos and Cambodia.

Three years, one invasion and an occupation later, Arnove found himself revisiting the book once more—ultimately deciding to lay out his own logic for withdrawal—this time from Iraq.

In the introduction to his book, *Iraq: The Logic of Withdrawal*, recently published by The New Press, Arnove writes: "In this book, I argue the case for the immediate withdrawal of all US and international troops from Iraq. I stress immediate withdrawal, as opposed to various proposals for a timetable for withdrawal, gradual withdrawal, or withdrawal when the situation in Iraq has 'stabilized' at some undefined point in the future. All of these, in the end, are recipes for continued occupation and bloodshed, for one simple reason: the people who will decide when the US military and its allies are prepared to leave are the very people who started the war in the first place and now have so much at stake in winning it."

We caught up with Arnove in the midst of a tour in support of the book.

Interview by Jeff Severns-Guntzel

Your book borrows its title from Howard Zinn's 1967 book *Vietnam: The Logic of Withdrawal*. You also borrow that book's author: Zinn provides both a foreword and afterword.

My book was inspired by Zinn's. I was struck by the parallels between the arguments that Zinn was making in 1967 and the arguments I felt needed to be made within the antiwar movement today. I was struck by the number of people I encountered who had opposed the invasion of Iraq in 2003 but had come to feel that now

that the United States had occupied the country it couldn't leave, that somehow an occupation that flowed directly from the invasion they had opposed could bring about a democratic future in Iraq—that it could lead to the rebuilding of that country or prevent a civil war from breaking out.¶ I went back and reread Howard's book and was really moved by the power of his argument: the only sensible solution to the unjust invasion in Vietnam was to call for immediate and unconditional withdrawal. He was countering arguments among liberals in the late 1960s that are similar to the ones we are hearing today. Many liberals felt "out now" wasn't a reasonable demand, that the antiwar movement had to be pushing for some different form of intervention or a phased withdrawal. ¶ Looking back now, Howard's argument was remarkably prescient. A heavy price was paid for the majority of the antiwar movement not adopting that position at an earlier time. Eventually the antiwar movement did take an "out now" position, but that happened later, in part as a result of the force of events in Vietnam: the Tet Offensive of 1968, the intensity of the Vietnamese resistance to the war, and the mounting death toll of Vietnamese and of US soldiers. By 1967, it was clear that the United States was being defeated in Vietnam—that they could not impose their will on the Vietnamese people. But rather than retreat, the US intensified the war against Vietnam and actually expanded the war to Laos and Cambodia. As a consequence, millions of people in Indochina died. To this day, people are still suffering

establishing a client state in Iraq, a country which has the world's second largest oil reserves and sits in a region with two thirds of the world's oil reserves, as well as most of the world's natural gas. ¶ Also, we have to keep in mind that the US government claimed that the invasion of Iraq, the toppling of the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein, and the establishment of democracy in Iraq would be part of a wave of democratization throughout the entire Middle East and beyond. A reversal in Iraq would not just be a reversal of US objectives in that country, but a major blow to the legitimacy of US power in the Middle East. So we have to realize what's at stake for the planners and defenders of empire in creating at least the appearance of victory in Iraq, at the cost of continued occupation and bloodshed. ¶ Another way Iraq differs from Vietnam is that in Vietnam the US was confronted by a traditional national liberation movement—a united front of the Vietnamese. It was highly organized, highly centralized, and could build on a model of successful national liberation movements that had fought against British, French, and other colonial powers. ¶ The resistance in Iraq is of a different character. There is no national liberation front; there is no united front. Instead, there is a far more decentralized, fragmented, divided opposition. There are increasing sectarian divisions within the Iraqi population. There is a fundamentalist and reactionary current that's gained ground within Iraq, which complicates the relationship between the US antiwar movement and the Iraqi opposition to the occupation. There are people

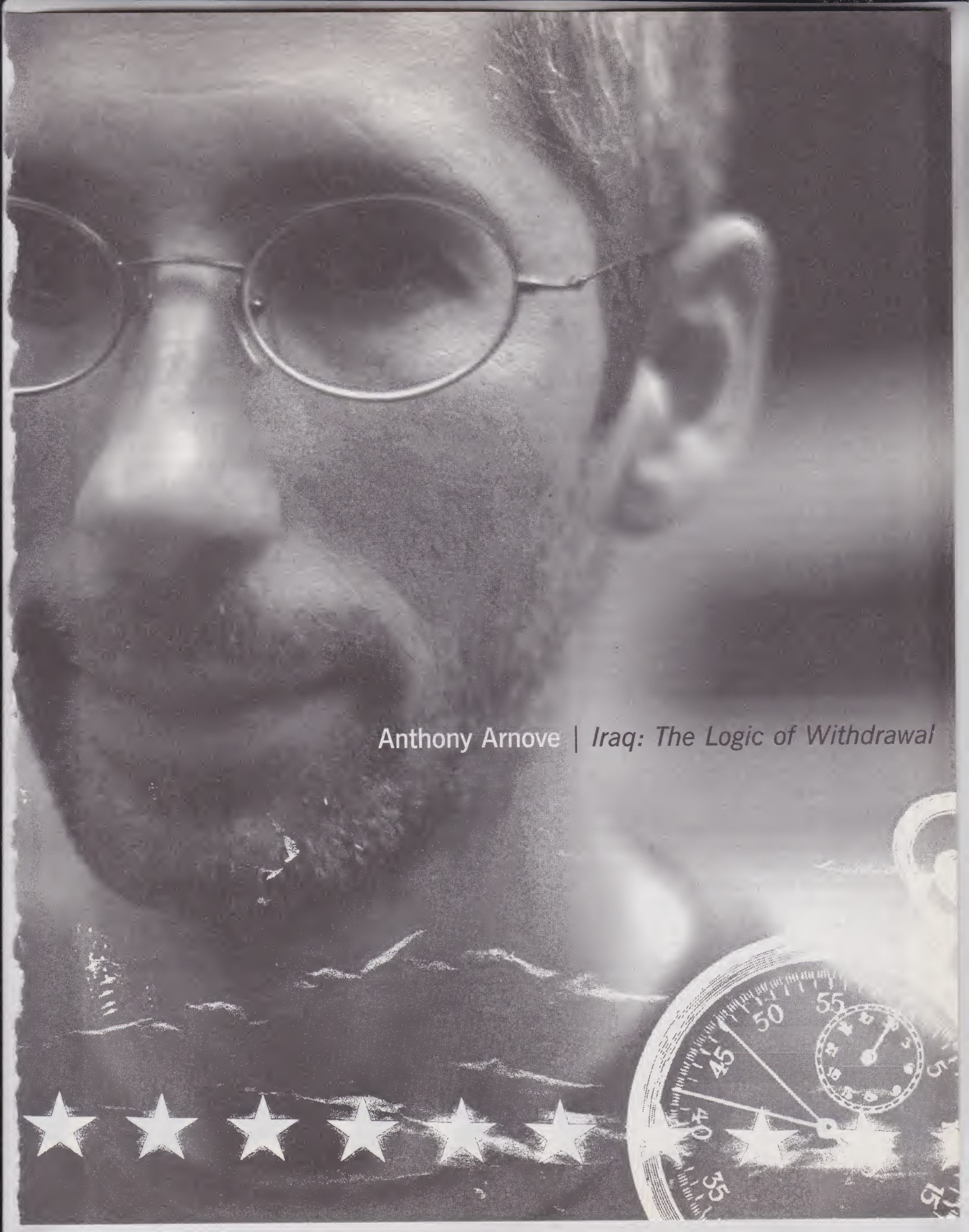
"There is no good way to occupy a country."

the consequences of that invasion, which left a horrible toxic legacy in the form of dioxin poisoning from the use of millions of gallons of Agent Orange in populated areas.

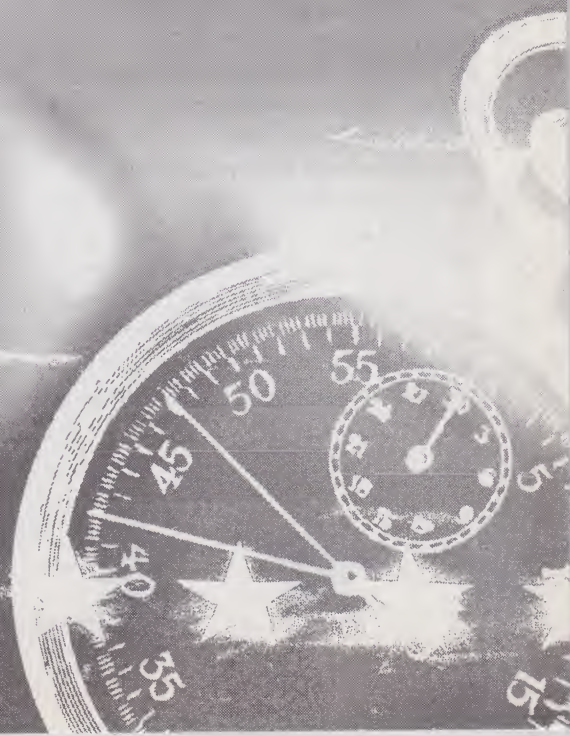
The Iraq-Vietnam comparisons started before the invasion itself. But in a way, that critique is too simplistic. In what ways is Iraq not like Vietnam and what unique challenges does the war in Iraq present to those who want to end it?

First of all, much more is at stake in Iraq today for the planners of US empire than was at stake in Vietnam in the late 1960s and early 1970s. That's a sobering thought. It means we as an antiwar movement will have to be more forceful and more organized and more creative if we're going to compel the US to abandon its aim of

engaged in sectarian violence and terrorist attacks that have nothing to do with the goal of achieving national liberation as we would define it. That complicates the situation. But we should not lose sight of the fact that the Iraqi resistance is not just Sunni, or foreign-based, or terrorist, as Washington claims. Most Iraqis oppose this occupation and are engaged in legitimate struggle for self-determination that we should support. ¶ Another difference between Iraq and Vietnam is that today the United States is operating in the context of a more multipolar world order. Vietnam occurred in the context of the Cold War and a bipolar world order that stabilized those conflicts to a certain degree because of the threat of mutually assured destruction—the counterbalance to US power that came from the Soviet



Anthony Arnove | *Iraq: The Logic of Withdrawal*



empire. Today, the United States faces different challenges as an imperial power and is seeking to preserve its status as the sole superpower, which means it needs to prevent the emergence of any rival economic or military power in the world—China in particular. Establishing hegemony in the Middle East is a vital goal because many of the economic and military rivals of the United States are far more dependent on the energy resources of that region.

Let's talk about your withdrawal scenario. What does it look like?

I recently spoke with a veteran who served in Iraq and is now organizing with Iraq Veterans Against the War (<http://www.ivaw.net/>). He had a very effective answer to your question. He said withdrawal is not a strategy, it's an executive order. If the military was given the order to quit Iraq, they could get out of Iraq in a very quick and orderly fashion. The real challenge is compelling the government to see that it has to withdraw. That is going to be very difficult. ¶ But it's important to stress that those of us in the antiwar movement who are calling for immediate withdrawal aren't saying that we should abandon the Iraqi people. We're saying that this occupation has had horrible consequences for the Iraqi people and we oppose it from a position of solidarity with them. So in calling for withdrawal, I think that we should also be calling for reparations for the suffering that's been caused by our intervention. Not just the invasion and occupation, but before that the more than 12 years of sanctions that devastated the population while doing nothing to harm the political elite—and before that the 1991 Gulf War, which left a terrible toxic legacy in Iraq much like the US left in Vietnam. And earlier still, there were all the years that the US supported Saddam Hussein during the worst of his crimes—crimes that later were used to justify the toppling of his regime. ¶ We should also be calling for an end to the economic occupation of Iraq. The US has put in place a series of economic regulations that benefit international corporations, not the Iraqi people, allowing for 100 percent foreign ownership of every aspect of Iraq's economy except for oil, which will effectively be under foreign control. ¶ The economic occupation has gone hand in hand with the establishment of long-term military bases in Iraq, which should be

shut down. The US wants to use Iraq as a staging ground for interventions in other countries in the Middle East—possibly Syria, possibly Iran. ¶ So it's not enough to say we want the troops to come home now. We want reparations. We want an end to the economic occupation and end to the military bases, as well. The United States is building in Baghdad today its largest embassy in the world—obviously so that the US can control and influence the character of the Iraqi government for years to come.

The earliest and most public articulation of a withdrawal scenario so far has come from Congressman Jack Murtha, who calls for a “re-deployment” to “Kuwait or to the surrounding area.” Murtha further calls for “a quick-reaction US force and an over-the-horizon presence of US Marines” to be “deployed to the region.” Murtha's position mirrors quite closely the nearly 25-year-old Carter Doctrine, which states that “It is US strategy to . . . defend our vital interests in the region as a whole by . . . building up our own capabilities to project force into the region while maintaining a credible presence there . . . including US force projection into the region.” In your book, you quote Michael Klare calling the war in Iraq “the natural extension of the Carter Doctrine.” If that is true, does Murtha's withdrawal strategy suggest any meaningful change in US policy toward Iraq and the Middle East?

The antiwar movement needs to be clear in differentiating its position from that of Murtha's. On one hand, I think it's problematic that the Democratic Party and the Republicans both have done so much to distance themselves from Murtha's strategy, which has the appearance of a withdrawal strategy. On the other hand, Murtha's position is not a withdrawal strategy and is not a principled opposition to the occupation of Iraq. Murtha is putting forward a strategy of redeployment that emphasizes air power, as opposed to boots on the ground, and reflects the views of top military brass in the US who feel that the war is being lost and that there needs to be a shift in tactics. He is essentially suggesting that the US shift tactics in pursuit of the same aim of being the regional hegemonic power. Murtha's position is far short of the position we should be adopting in the antiwar movement. ¶ And it does flow

from the Carter Doctrine and what Michael Klare describes quite accurately as the “globalization of the Carter Doctrine”—by which he means the US is not only going to intervene militarily to control the energy resources of the Middle East, but increasingly in other parts of the world, as it is already doing. Today the US imports as much of its oil from Africa as it does from the Middle East. I think it's no accident that we are seeing increasing military cooperation with a number of African, including new training exercises and increasing military spending. The US has control of African energy resources in mind. We need to see Iraq in that global picture.

In the US Congress, we have seen the surfacing of a debate over withdrawal, where not too long ago the word was barely mentioned. What do you make of this development?

We are seeing the emergence of recognition among some in Congress, in the military, in the establishment media, and even in the business class that things are going very badly in Iraq. There's also recognition among some sections of the Democratic Party that the war is increasingly unpopular. Bush's approval ratings are the lowest since Nixon during Watergate. Polls show more and more people opposing the war, and I think there is some maneuvering that is now taking place to take political advantage of that situation. ¶ The problem is that a lot of these proposals are too little too late, and fall short of what we really need to be demanding. It's important to recognize that the September 30th goal and the end of 2006 goal have both come up in the context of a midterm election in which some Democrats are looking to gain a tactical advantage and take back the House and the Senate from the Republicans. ¶ The interesting thing will be to see what happens when September 30th passes and when the end of 2006 passes and US troops are still in Iraq. The Bush administration has said that it is not their decision to withdraw; that it will be up to the next president. If you go back to the Vietnam War, the war was traded back and forth between Republicans and Democrats. A top aid to Tony Blair said recently that their optimistic scenario was that British troops would leave Iraq in the year 2010.

Immediate withdrawal does not enjoy universal support in the antiwar movement. Many people



who opposed the war are not comfortable calling for an immediate and unconditional end to the occupation that followed. How do you explain this apparent contradiction?

I think it comes from something very real, which is a fear of what would happen to the Iraqi people if the US left. There is a genuine concern for the Iraqis—a fear that the likelihood of civil war would increase, that reactionary and fundamentalist currents would gain the upper hand, that we would be abandoning the Iraqi people after having caused them so much suffering. But I think it also grows out of a number of misconceptions. First, the US is increasing the likelihood of civil war, not decreasing it, through its presence. Already in Iraq there is a low-level civil war breaking out. The US has used divide and

the rights of minorities and to help people who are living under dictatorships is through military intervention, particularly military intervention by the United States, the world's sole superpower.

¶ Unfortunately, elements of the antiwar movement have absorbed aspects of this thinking, or at least are not challenging it. We should be challenging the underlying assumptions of that school of thought instead of confusing the rhetoric that's used to justify imperialist intervention with its real aims. The US government doesn't care about the spread of democracy or human rights in the world. They care about access to markets, control of energy resources, the suppression of movements that are considered "destabilizing," the suppression of regimes that are out of their control, and the creation of a stable

I think more people are open to the argument for immediate withdrawal. I'm encouraged. The number of Iraq war veterans who have been making the call for immediate withdrawal has been very important. Iraq Veterans Against War calls for immediate withdrawal, reparations for the Iraqi people, and for taking care of the veterans of this war and other US wars. I think it's very important that the voice of veterans is heard more often, and I think it helps build support for the logic of withdrawal. ¶ I also think people have been influenced by the fact that so many active duty troops in Iraq now see the logic of withdrawal. Zogby did a poll that was published in Military Times showing that 72 percent of active duty troops in Iraq would like to withdraw within a year and 29 percent would like to withdraw immediately, much

"The troops have seen first hand the gap between the lies that were used to sell this war and the reality."

rule strategies, introduced a supply of arms into Iraq, supported Shi'ite militias that have carried out horrible sectarian attacks and fueled Sunni and Shi'ite conflict in Iraq, and has completely distorted every aspect of Iraqi society through the occupation. ¶ Another misconception is that this occupation, which is causing so much suffering for the Iraqi people, could somehow become a more enlightened occupation. There is no good way to occupy a country. It's a fundamentally unjust and inherently problematic pursuit. The occupation that has caused so much suffering in Iraq cannot become the cure—it's the source of the problem. ¶ Tied to this misconception is the notion that only the enlightened Western powers, only the so-called civilized countries can bring about positive change in Iraq and the Middle East. This is an unfortunate retread of a very old idea used by the French to justify their occupations and interventions in Africa—the idea of the "civilizing mission." The British used a similar idea to justify their colonial occupations in Africa and India—the "white man's burden." We've seen a revival of these ideas, of a kind of humanitarian imperialism, or democratic imperialism, or civilizing imperialism, often articulated by liberals, that says the way to promote human rights in the world, the way to promote women's rights or democratic rights, the way to promote

framework for their military bases, for their corporations. The language of human rights and women's rights is a cover—we shouldn't get confused about that. We need to develop a more consciously anti-imperialist politics within the antiwar movement that questions the broader framework of US empire and the so-called war on terror. ¶ I think we also have to challenge some of the Islamophobia that has been encouraged by our government as a way of creating a new framework for justifying interventions after the end of the Cold War. Instead of the communist threat, we're increasingly being sold the Islamic threat: the threat of Islamic terrorism, the threat of Islamic fundamentalism. ¶ The irony, of course, is that the US has long supported reactionary Islamic currents in the Middle East and elsewhere in the world as a counterweight to nationalist, secular, and socialist currents. Zargawi was trained in Afghanistan as part of the U.S. backed Muslim insurgency against the Russians. Osama bin Laden has his origins in that same operation. The US encouraged the rise of fundamentalist currents in Iraq through the years of sanctions-induced poverty and destitution and again through their invasion of Iraq.

As you've been out promoting the book, have you perceived any shift in attitude towards your vision of immediate withdrawal?

more than the number of the troops that believe US troops should stay until the "mission is accomplished." ¶ That's a significant development, given all the pressure on soldiers not to question the mission and just to follow orders. And it reveals the contradictions between being told they would be greeted as liberators and the fact that they're being greeted as occupiers. More than 2,500 of them are dead, they haven't discovered weapons of mass destruction, and they haven't brought democracy to Iraq. The troops have seen first hand the gap between the lies that were used to sell this war and the reality. ¶ Moreover, as the occupation has continued, people have seen how each of the so-called turning points that this administration has declared have turned out to be nothing of the sort. We were told that the violent opposition to the occupation would end once Saddam Hussein was captured. They said once we have elections, then once we have a constitution, then once we have a stable government, and now they're saying that with the assassination of Zargawi the country will turn a corner. After each of these "turning points," the situation has only deteriorated. I think more people are seeing that as long as the US stays in Iraq, the situation will only continue to get worse. ©

Jeff Severs Guntzel, a longtime contributor to Punk Planet, is editor of Electronic Iraq (electroniciraq.net), where this interview originally appeared.



Having failed to find any weapons of mass destruction in Iraq—the first big lie of the invasion—the United States has turned to a new big lie: George Bush, Donald Rumsfeld, John Negroponte, Condoleezza Rice, John Bolton, and their friends are bringing democracy to the Iraqi people.

Democracy has nothing to do with why the United States is in Iraq. The Bush administration invaded Iraq to secure long-established imperial interests in the Middle East—the same reason Washington backed Saddam Hussein as he carried out the worst of his crimes against the Iraqi people, the Kurds, and the Iranians (crimes that were later used to justify going to war against him in 1991 and removing him from power in 2003).

The United States has recognized for decades that control over Middle Eastern energy resources is a prerequisite for US global hegemony. The centrality of oil to US imperial calculations has only increased since the United States first sought to replace the British and French as the outside power controlling the region's energy resources in the period after World War II. US economic, military, and political competitors in Europe and Asia, particularly China and India, need to greatly increase their energy imports from the Middle East and, in fact, are proportionally far more dependent on oil from the region than is the United States, which gets most of its oil from its own reserves, as well as from Canada, Venezuela, and other sources closer to home. Thus there is increasing competition over control of oil, oil pipelines, and oil shipping routes.

As the Bush administration document *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* clearly laid out in September 2002, the United States will not allow the emergence of any potential competitor, seeking to preserve the massive gap between itself and other powers.

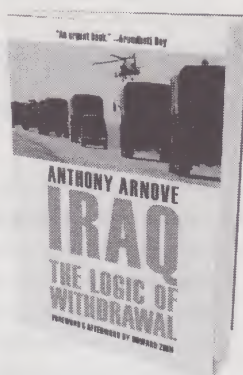
By invading Iraq, Washington hoped not only to install a regime more favorable to US oil interests. It hoped to use Iraq as a staging ground for further interventions to redraw the map of the Middle East. Several US bases have been established in Iraq and are likely to remain long after US troops are expelled.

The largest US embassy in the world today is in Baghdad. All of this has nothing to do with democracy. In fact, the United States has long been a major obstacle to any secular, democratic, nationalist, or socialist movements in the region that stood for fundamental change, preferring instead what is euphemistically called “stability,” even if it meant supporting the most reactionary fundamentalist religious forces or repressive regimes. This led it to align not only with an expansionist Israel, to defend Israeli occupation and settlement of Palestinian lands, and to allow Israel to develop nuclear weapons, but to support the overthrow of Mossadegh in Iran in 1953 and to arm and befriend the repressive regime that replaced him. Washington has historically backed—and continues to support—the royal family of Saudi Arabia. In the words of the *New York Times*, the two countries have agreed to a “basic compact: the Saudis deliver oil, the Americans deliver the

weaponry that protects the oil.” As one Bush official put it, “Oil runs the world and the Saudis are the linchpin oil production.”

The US government opposes genuine democracy in the Middle East for a simple reason: if ordinary people controlled the region's energy resources, they might be put toward local economic development and social needs, rather than going to fuel the profits of Western oil companies.

Despite all the hype about Iraqis deciding their own future, an examination of the US-sponsored elections of January 2005 shows how hollow the claims of supporting democracy are in practice. The United States was forced by popular Iraqi pressure to hold elections far earlier than it had hoped, particularly given that its own hoped-for proxies, such as Ahmed Chalabi and Iyad Allawi, had so little actual support among the Iraqi people. Having suc-



THE UNITED STATES IS NOT BRINGING DEMOCRACY TO IRAQ

By Anthony Arrove

cumbed to popular opinion and called an election, the occupation authorities then worked to gain control of the process and to turn events to their own advantage. Iraqis were not given actual candidate lists until the day of the vote. Meanwhile, the leading parties campaigned by raising popular slogans calling for withdrawal of occupation troops, but officially dropped this demand under US pressure in the days before the election.

Many Iraqis thought that by voting they would bring about an end to the occupation, but the reality was quite different. As Phyllis Bennis of the Institute for Policy Studies wrote, the elections were designed “to provide a veneer of credibility and legitimacy to the continuation of US control of Iraq, “helping to establish a “US-friendly government that will welcome the US military bases in Iraq.”

Finally, it is important to raise a larger point. Democracy cannot be “installed” by outside powers, at gunpoint. Genuine democracy can come about only through the struggle of people for control over their own lives and circumstances, through movements that are themselves democratic in nature. When confronted with such movements, such as the 1991 Iraqi uprising, the US government has consistently preferred to see them crushed than to see them succeed. ☺

Excerpted from *Iraq: The Logic of Withdrawal* (The New Press). Copyright 2006 Anthony Arrove.

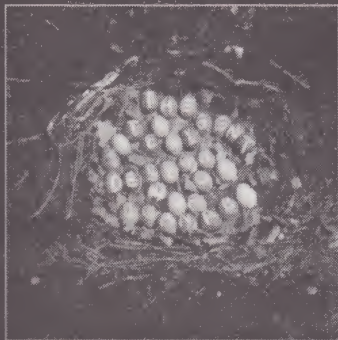
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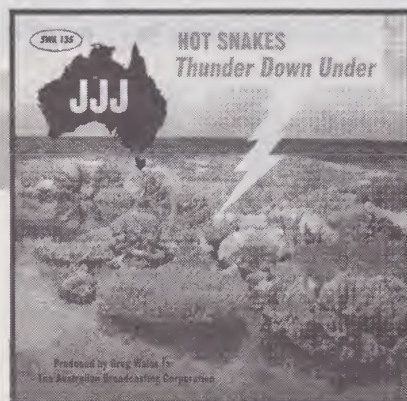
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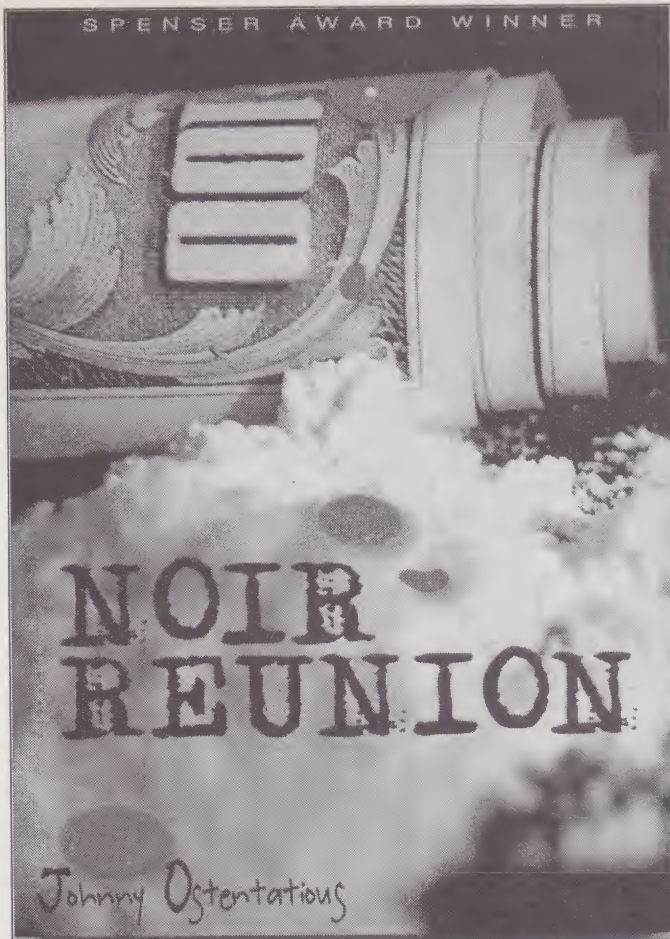
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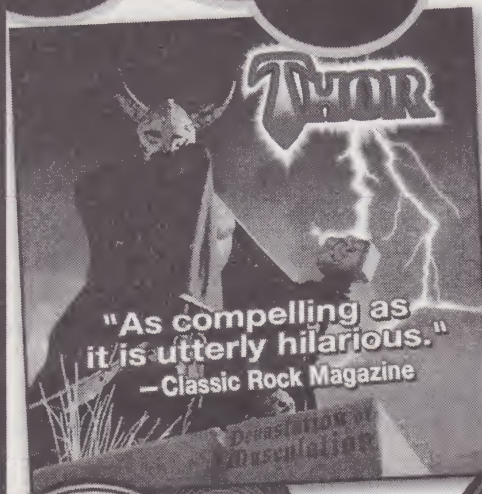
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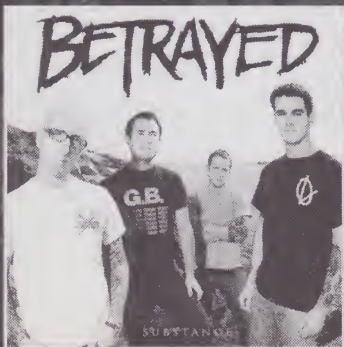
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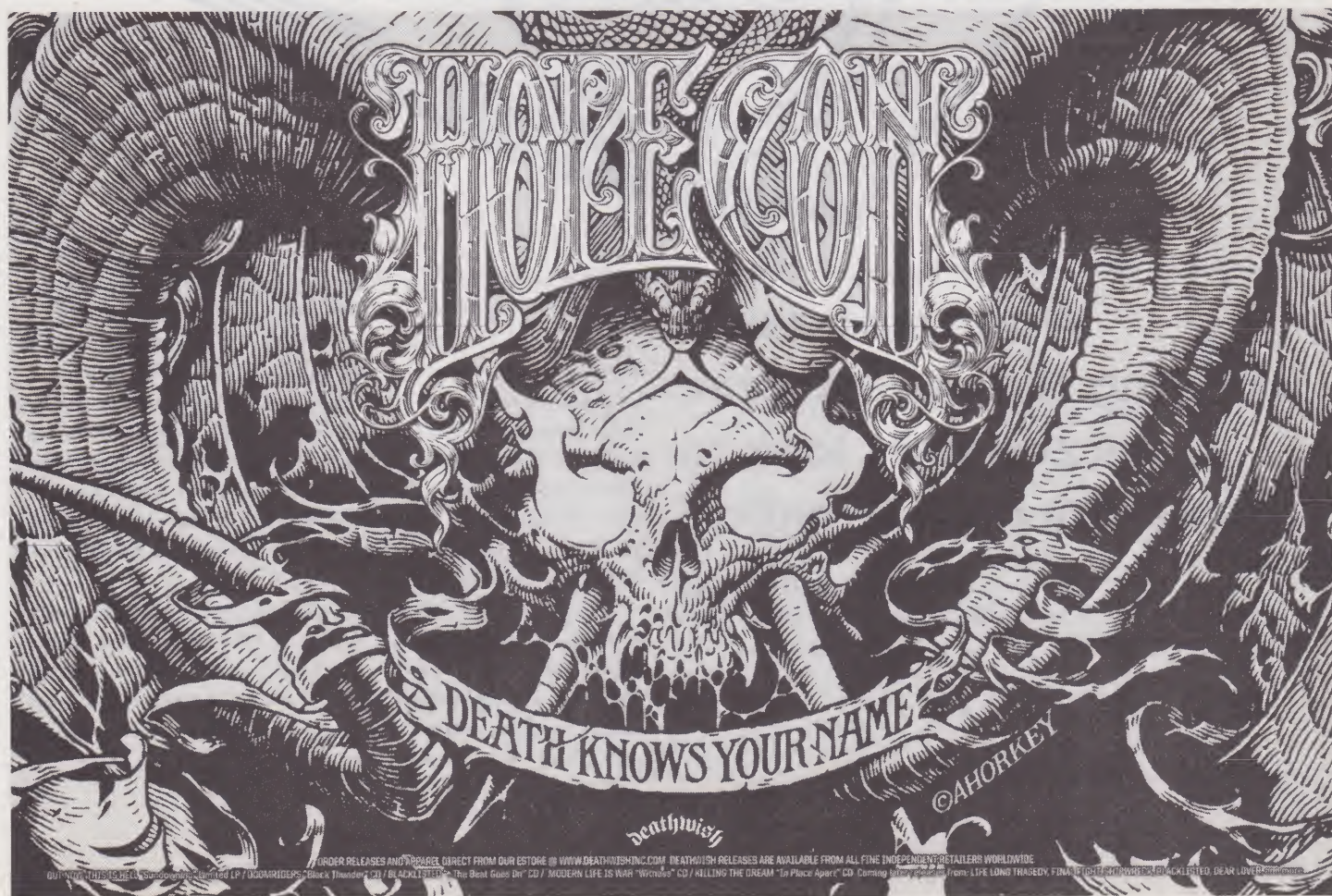


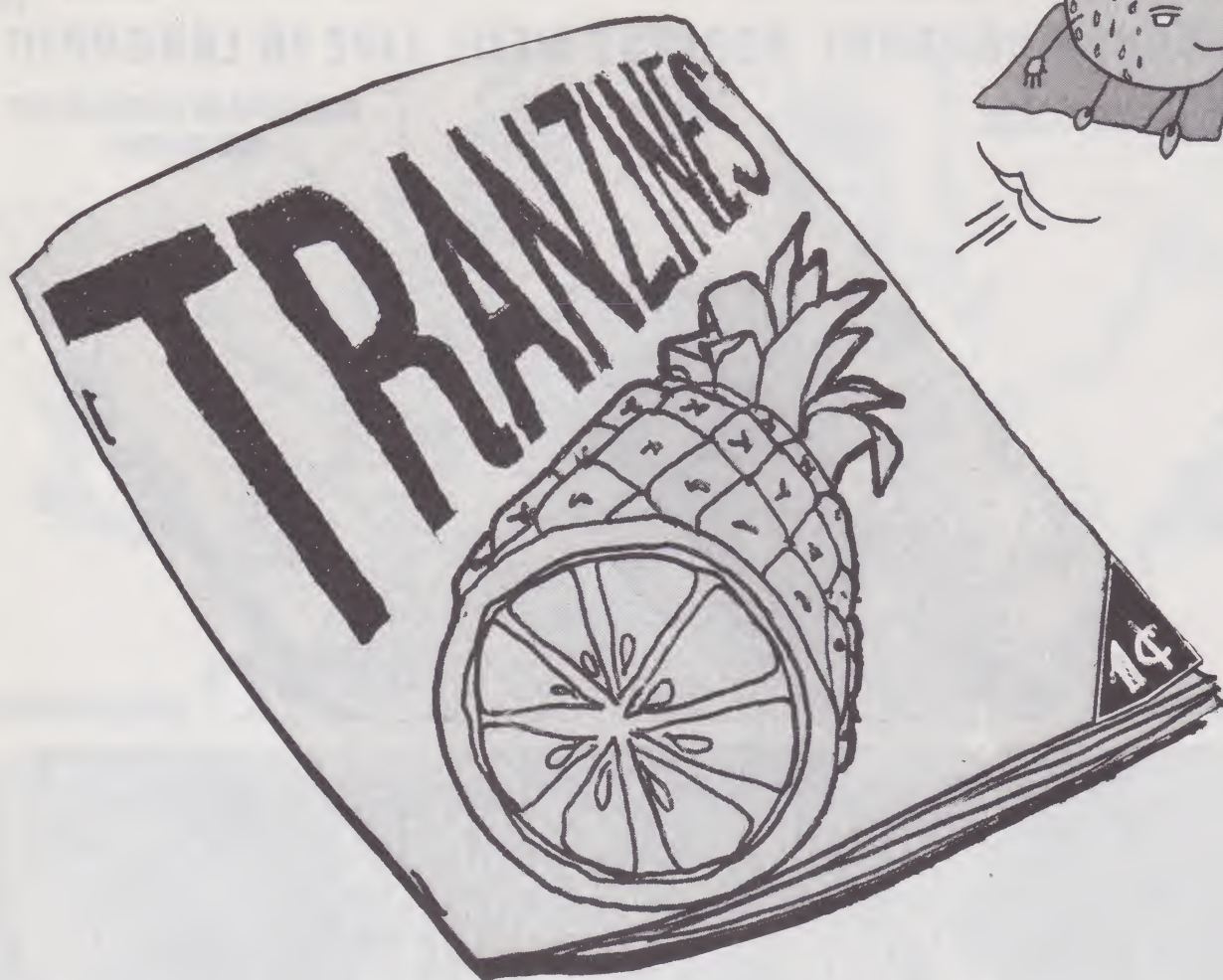
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With trans issues entering the mainstream, trans zinesters look to keep the debate radical

BY MAYA SCHENWAR

ILLUSTRATIONS BY NADINE Y NAKANISHI

There's the Oscar-nominated hit, *TransAmerica*. There's the new book *Self-Made Man*, in which author Norah Vincent tries on maleness for a year and a half. And even the often-less-than-risk-taking *The L Word* features a transgender character this season. Trans issues have hit the big time. However, despite mainstream media's slowly increasing interest in—and occasional thoughtful exploration of—trans issues, many big-time portrayals don't get past stereotypes and jokes. (Take, for example, TBS's reality TV show, *He's a Lady*, in which super-macho guys dress in heels for a day to get the true “female experience.”)

Fortunately, another rapidly growing sector of the media is stepping up to broaden and complicate the picture: print zines. A huge range of publications are devoted to trans issues, each of which may include editorials, poetry, art, fiction, interviews, even musical compositions. Trans-focused zines have been steadily multiplying in recent years.

Why? As public interest in gender variance increases, it's important to show that it's about people—not simply newsworthy phenomena—said Red Durkin, who produces four zine series and tours with the Tranny Roadshow, a traveling group of performers, artists, and writers.

"Zines are an almost perfect outlet for us," Durkin said. "Being trans is personal. There's no instruction manuals. I think the failing of any broad sweeping analysis is that it could never encompass all of us. The only way for all of us to be heard is for each of us to have our own voice, and that's what the zine world offers." Many zines are produced and distributed by a single author or artist. Others are collaborative efforts, but most zines are never shipped off to an outside publisher or distributor, so zine writers need not worry about misrepresentation.

The complete freedom of self-identification that a zine offers is especially important for trans populations, noted Jamez Terry, a co-founder of the Tranny Roadshow.

"Zines are the ultimate DIY media, which means you're totally free to define yourself and no one can challenge your right to identify however you want within your own zine," said Terry, who has produced more than 50 zines, including *Transcendence*, a zine by and for trans youth. "No one else is going to edit you and get your pronouns wrong."

And while we're on the topic, no one can assign your zine any pronouns either. Since zinesters don't gear their products toward a particular section on a Barnes & Noble shelf, they don't need to grant them identities that fit into culturally predetermined categories. Trans zines are instead characterized by fragmentation, mixture, parody, and ambiguity. According to Doug Blandy, a University of Oregon professor and zine scholar, zines are the perfect example of postmodernism, throwing all the identities and definitions we thought we knew into question, including our definitions of gender—and of magazines.

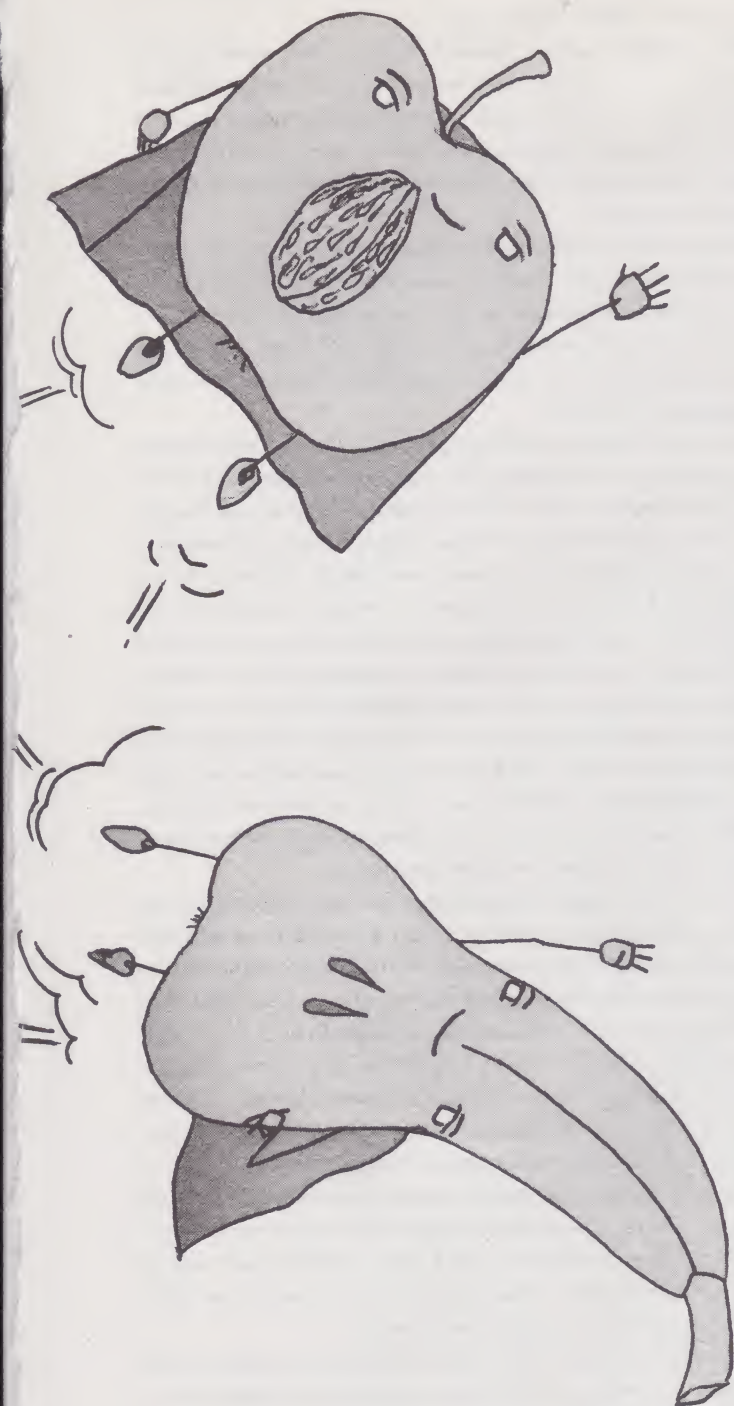
DIY Democracy

Blandy doesn't see zines as merely a good example of postmodernism in the midst of a rigidly structured society. He sees them as a route to changing that society.

"I believe strongly that people, through their artistry, can participate in the public dialogue essential to democracy," Blandy said. Zines allow radical ideas—many of which would never appear in a mainstream magazine—to emerge onto the printed page. They then spark discussion between zinesters and their audience, both directly and indirectly, leading to more zines and more conversations—a do-it-yourself chain of democratic participation.

This means that, unlike TV and mainstream print media, which produce a static stream of "information," zines foster a dynamic forum for discussion, in which readers are just as important as writers. The barista who plucks a stray zine off the café floor can write to the creator and debunk her column, or take up one of the zine's rallying cries and publicize it to a much wider audience than the zine might reach.

This also means that, in the zine world, the connection between personal and political is constantly blurred. Elke Zobl, creator of the Grrrl Zine Network, which publicizes and promotes connections be-



tween feminist, queer, and trans zinesters, says that simply putting one's uncensored voice into the world makes a political statement. For trans people, speaking and writing as themselves may be a radical act.

"It's a truly democratic form of media," Zobl said. "Anyone who reads a zine can create one. Insofar as [people's] thoughts and experiences are made public, zines are not only an important personal outlet and means of empowerment but also have a significant social and political function."

Take the experience of Jackie O, a performance artist, sex worker, and "SMBD aficionado" whose zine, *Crazy Pink Revolver (CPR)*, was first churned out on a manual typewriter and photocopied "by any means necessary." (One issue was scanned and copied illegally at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia.) The zine spans a broad range of topics—some of Jackie's favorite pieces include "The Adventures of Tampon Boy," "The Few, the Proud, the Queer Tranny Vampires," and "Wigs IOI." Jackie began by handing out *CPR* "brick by brick and queer by queer," then distributed some copies to independent bookstores across the country. Now in her 11th year of producing *CPR*, Jackie says she sees it as a mode of inserting herself into a society that has marginalized her.

"I always felt that I could carry my zines with me wherever I go as an extension of my selves," she said. "Oh, and I get around!"

Like Thomas Paine did back in the day, today's zinesters often distribute or sell their zines by hand, lending a face to their ideas—direct representation in its purest form. Durkin, Terry, and other Tranny Roadshow participants tote their zines across the country, displaying them wherever they perform. Often, the zines become part of the performance through readings, onstage references, and even semi-subliminal messages (Terry sports a tattoo that reads, "Zinester").

Some zinesters have combined forces with another direct-democracy institution: libraries. Terry and the Tranny Roadshow's other co-founder, Kelly Shortandqueer, founded the Denver Zine Library, which boasts over 70 specifically trans-focused zines, not to mention all the queer-related zines which include trans perspectives.

Similarly, by collecting queer and trans zines, the Milwaukee-based Queer Zine Archive Project (QZAP) aims to help marginalized folks get noticed, so that their views become part of more widespread conversations. "This will then (hopefully) engender them (pun intended) to take action, and also to make zines so that others can do the same," said Milo Miller, co-founder of QZAP. "In some ways, it's viral action and self-publication."

At the same time, library projects remind us that zine-style democracy is just as much about reaction and self-reflection. The action of making zines only goes as far as people are willing to put in the time to read them, process them, and make their realities part of their lives. When you take a zine out of the Denver Zine Library, you may be carrying away one of just a few copies of the publication. Your time with that zine—falling in love with its artwork, having imaginary conversations with its author, reenacting childhood memories, falling asleep—counts as a democratic movement in its own right: reclaiming your turf as a responsive reader.

Building Community, One Scrap at a Time

Being a responsive reader doesn't mean simply nodding emphatically at a well-argued editorial. In the zine world, it often means

making friends. Elke Zobl, founder of the Grrrl Zine Network, a resource site which provides an expansive listing of print zines, says that many trans zines have the same underlying message for their readers: "You are not alone!"

"For many, especially those living in small towns in the middle of nowhere, zines are a great way of connecting with like-minded folks around the world, without ever meeting them in person," Zobl said. "This is important for queer and transgender youth who often feel like outsiders and have a difficult time in school and at home."

Though Elke notes that lots of zines may fall under our radar because they don't have a website, aren't explicitly called "zines," or are written in languages we don't speak (she mentioned zinesters in the United Arab Emirates, Peru, and Israel with whom she's corresponded), they're still circulating in local networks and bringing people together.

In certain situations, zines are practically the only way of overcoming isolating circumstances and uniting trans people. Just ask Amanda Armstrong, creator of *Transsexuals in Prison*. Armstrong thought up the idea while working with Books Through Bars, a Philadelphia organization that sends books to incarcerated people. She noticed that, although trans folks are overrepresented in the prison system, the organization wasn't getting any requests for books about trans issues. So the zine began as an attempt to promote the exchange of trans books, as well as the work of people on the inside. Armstrong forged connections with several organizations that work with incarcerated trans people and together they spread the word. Before long, Armstrong was receiving dozens of submissions. The zine came out in the summer of 2004, chockfull of poetry, art, critiques, info about the legal system and how to obtain medical treatment, and lists of resources.

"One of the most common things that incarcerated people who have read the zine say to me is that it helped them feel like they weren't alone," Armstrong said. "Many prisons in the United States don't allow inmates to send mail to other prisons, meaning that it's very hard for incarcerated trans people to be in touch with other people in their situation. Even if the zine wasn't a way for people to talk directly with each other, at least it allowed people to share a little bit about themselves with people in a similar situation, and to read about other people in their situation."

Transsexuals in Prison also includes advice for free-world activists looking to support incarcerated people. This brings up an important issue: "trans communities" and "zine communities" usually are not exclusive entities whose covers are shut to people that don't consider themselves transgender or zinesters.

In an effort to include folks besides seasoned trans zinesters, Red Durkin plans to develop a trans-educational zine. It's an attempt to begin filling the void left by mainstream media in terms of information about gender variance. This won't constitute a single-authority textbook, but rather a collection of different trans experiences.

"I'm not an expert on how to deal with trans people," Durkin said. "There's an assumption that you have all the answers because you are trans, and that's just not the case. I want to do something that really expresses the diversity amongst trans people, because the truth is, not all of us even read zines."

Why Paper's the Way

The need for zines in the trans community seems undeniable. But why is Jackie O holed up in the Children's Hospital, frantically copying scraps she banged out on a manual typewriter? Why are Terry and Durkin cutting and pasting while traveling with the Roadshow, using *pencils* to scribble out poems? And how could the Denver Zine Library staff even *think* about collecting all those little booklets, giving up their free time to worry over checkout dates and bent covers? Why don't they all just get websites and change the date next to the "update" bar every couple of months?

For Amanda Armstrong, the answer was obvious. Incarcerated folks don't have web access, so the majority of her readership would be left without access to the information she hoped to provide. Other zinesters' decisions to stick to print are less clear. But Armstrong's situation points to a major reason to bypass the web: lots of people still don't have Internet access, and many young women and trans youth across the world fall into this category.

Another access block comes to mind as far as trans zines go: for many cool sites, unless you've got the URL on hand, you'll never discover them. Instead, you might find a myriad of cheap tranny porn. (Trust me: I spent a lot of time Googling while researching this article.) Strictly Internet-based zines exclude the majority of people—the ones that don't have trans-zine-savvy friends. Print zines—found in stores, at special events, on the street, etc.—have the potential for a more diverse readership. They also avoid the stream of anonymous abuse that barrages some trans e-zine message boards, forums, and e-mails.

Yet for a lot of trans zinesters, more personal motivations were key to their choice of print. The hands-on element amplifies the zine's potential for unhindered individual expression—the reason that many chose the zine form in the first place. With a print zine, not only can you ensure that your pronouns are right and your story isn't distorted, you can handsew the pages, color the binding yourself, glue on your own photos. One zine I came across even included a mini candy bar. A hard copy affords its maker total control.

"When you have a print zine, no matter what the subject, the whole point is that it's your copy," Durkin said. "You are responsible for taking care of it, you can lend it out to people, you can crumple it up and burn it if you want; it's yours."

What's more, you can touch it, as you can a person—and personhood is what many of these zines are working to express, say Durkin and Jackie O, who both spoke of the particular importance of print media in trans communities. The zine becomes an affirmation of its creator's self-identified physical reality.

"[The zine] is like a living extension of a person," Durkin said. "You can have a connection with it." Connections between people are what forge radical democracies, build communities, bring solace and strength. Zines are about emotions as well as politics, reaching middle-of-Nebraska trans youth as well as offering an alternative perspective to *He's a Lady*. All the trans zines in the world may never reach the same number of people as a TV broadcast is capable of doing in one minute. But as they are passing from hand to hand and their words go zipping from mouth to mouth and brain to brain, they're not just reaching for people—they're touching them. ©



**Your time with that zine—
falling in love with its artwork,
having imaginary conversations
with its author, reenacting
childhood memories, falling
asleep—counts as a democratic
movement in its own right:
reclaiming your turf as a
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A Week in the Life of an Independent Bookseller

by Liz Mason

Monday

Even though we don't open until noon, I come in at 10:00 a.m. to do paperwork in the dark, pay consignors, answer e-mails, use carpet cleaner to cleanup a dachshund vomit stain in front of the chap books—standard office procedures in the world of an independent bookstore.

The computer at the front counter (which also doubles as register and my main office work space) is still acting funny. In the middle of working, it will suddenly go to sleep. It won't freeze and you won't lose any of your work, but the screen will turn black, and the iTunes will turn off until you rattle the mouse or hit the space bar. It's almost like it ate a big meal and then decided to take a nap. The theory my two co-workers and I have accepted is that it happens when it gets too hot in the store, so we have to keep it cold to keep the computer awake.

Just like the Lettermen studio audience.

A man with an unruly beard pounds on the door at 11:04 a.m. and thrusts 10 copies of *Paranoia* zine at me. "I don't want any money. Just make sure they're on display," he growls. Then he tells me the story of solar power.

When I open the store, the phone is alive. A reporter from the *Washington Post* wants to talk about "that new graphic novel *A Scanner Darkly*." A giggly girl wants to confirm we sell various issues of *Housewives At Play*. An angry publisher demands a check for \$2.70 worth of sold zines. A pushy woman from a movie promotion company demands that we hang a poster in the window for that Al Gore environmental movie. She asks me my name and then starts using it in sentences, which always stinks to me of in your face sales pitches. She is so aggressive that it makes me scrunch my nose like something smells. I tell her that we don't have enough window space right now since we reserve it for flyers for in-store events.

My first customers of the day are a young couple with a baby.

The dad heads straight for the newest issue of *Tape Op*. The mom and baby stroller head for the new table. I open iTunes to the random function. It greets the shoppers with Blowfly's "Too Fat to Fuck."

Today's mail highlight: a personal check mail order for one mini comic (\$.50) and postage (\$6.00).

Tuesday

Overnight there has been street art action: someone has spray-painted four stenciled razorblades on the outside of the building below the window next to the door. Each blade has a heart in it, and it actually looks sort of cool but I dread pointing it out to the owner. Someone else has adhered a sticker to the bricks below the front window that says "BULL." A Night Court fan?

A store regular and consignor accompanies her parents to the store. She points to her publication in the local zine area.

"That's great, honey!" Mom gushes. Two gentlemen wearing white belts and reading *Chunklet* look up.

"Shhhh!" her daughter reprimands, wincing, petting the air with her hands.

The cell phone of a man thumbing through *Feminine Anarchy* rings, and as he walks outside, he says to the caller "Oh not much. Lookin' at a book about broads pissin' in public."

As I am assembling a monthly finance report on the front computer, a man enters the store and asks for me specifically. He has arrived with a poster to hang in our window. It is for the Al Gore environmental movie. The poster has a penguin on it. I do not allow the man to hang the poster. He fidgets at the counter in front of me, hovering and swaying with a strange deliberation and then finally shuffles out. Minutes later, I answer the phone. The same man asks for me. He says, "You will kill all the penguins!" and hangs up.

Every few transactions, I notice that the receipt printer periodically refuses to print unless you restart it. It is an old printer; I

have been here for five years, and this receipt printer was here before me. Every time it completes a printout, you have to manually roll up the duplicate yellow in-store tape roll so that it does not spill over the counter. It is the bane of my existence. This receipt printer and I hate each other. I am perpetually rolling up the damn receipt tape all damn day until I have tendonitis.

Today's mail highlight: a letter requesting tickets to our next taping of the *Jerry Springer Show*. We tape the letter on the mail art wall next to the jackalope head.

Wednesday

One of my co-workers has made a sign the night before and posted it in the free area that reads, "dude, we are out of *Vice*."

I am exhausted. The security system service called me at 4:30 this morning to tell me the store alarm was going off, that they detected a disturbance in the matrix that is the back of the store where we used to keep the porn, until we moved the porn to the front of the store so we could make sure nobody was shoving it down their pants. (The porn's new location is accompanied by a sign that announces people must be fully clothed, due to a series of unfortunate real-life events involving a man in very short shorts.) Now the photo, film and art books are in the back. I arrive at the store on my bike five minutes before the cops do. Together we investigate to find that it was a false alarm. All five cops are intrigued by the photo book *Bubble Bath Girls*.

By mid-afternoon I have sent out the monthly e-mail about in-store events and notable new books to our e-mail subscriber list, assembled magazine returns, sorted invoices for the owner to pay tomorrow, met with a sales rep from the company that sells T-bone scented air fresheners, and changed the prices on our web site of a zine about urban spelunking to reflect a price increase from \$1.00 to \$2.00.

It is time for a break. When I get back from watching the dogs in the doggie park, my co-worker shows me that the receipt printer is not working at all. I call the receipt printer company for technical assistance but they are closed for the day. (It will be more than

"The caller wanted to know if we taxidermize cats."

a week until we get the receipt printer situation all sorted, since it seems that there's only one guy in the whole country who repairs this model. We opt for a new printer instead, one that manually spools the in-store duplicate tape. There's also a cutter on the machine that rips the receipts for you. When the receipt printer finally arrives I lavish it with kisses.)

The new issue of *McSweeney's* arrives. Somehow, instead of 40 copies, 200 are delivered. This has happened for the past five issues. Each time the distributor promises it will not happen again.

Today's mail highlight: a zine has come in for consignment consisting of only black and white drawings of grass.

Thursday

We are out of Crispin Hellion Glover books again. My co-worker volunteers to place the order, which entails calling a quiet elderly woman who we think is his mom. She is very nice, and

we picture her feeding Crispin Glover tomato soup and petting his head.

My other co-worker answers the ringing phone, and when he hangs it up he laughs. He tells me that the caller wanted to know if we taxidermize cats.

A long-haired greasy gentleman with a sour smell continually glances at me, and as I catch his eye, he stacks up works by Hakim Bey, Edward Said, and Guy Debord in a pile and settles in to the back couch. He furrows his brow and makes loud "Mmmph!" noises indicating condemnation of the status quo. I walk by to fax an order to a publisher, and I see that he is using the *Situationist Handbook* to cover what he is really reading: *Bondage Fairie Fetish*, Volume 2.

Today's mail highlight: a catalog for renaissance faire clothing! Also, porn film stills from the editor of *Cinema Sewer*!

Friday

Whoever said that print is dead has surely never been greeted outside the front door with towering stacks of the *Monthly Aspetarian*, the *Chicago Reader*, and the *Auto Times* as I am today. Everything is soggy because of last night's rain. There is also half a red

Gatorade thoughtfully left for me on the ground, in case I get thirsty lugging in wet newspapers.

A local author does a scheduled reading from his new book of short stories at 7:30 p.m. His only attendees are his (much younger) girlfriend and two shoppers we convinced to stay so that he would not feel bad. He finishes at 8:16. "And now for a question and answer session!" he declares. "How do you like my work?!"

Today's mail highlight: a Quill catalog. Office supply porn! I fantasize about labeling purple file folders.

Saturday

Today is the big day! It's an in-store signing with a famous alternative comics artist known for his work about an adult man with stunted emotional development. The crowd is composed of among others, local minicomics artists who write about being an adult male with stunted emotional development. The line to have the artist sign books extends from the back of the store to the front door, but nobody is actually buying any of his books, since they're fans that have brought their own copies. Unfortunately, in my anticipation of looking unprepared for the event, I have ordered way too many books. I hope our sister store will take some off our hands so we don't have to pay a ton to ship them back to the distributor.

Today's mail highlight: a letter from an incarcerated gentleman who has taken a liking to zine reviewers in our catalog. He offers detailed descriptions of what sexual acts he prefers to perform on each writer.

Sunday

One of my co-workers calls me at home to tell me that the computer totally died, that it won't even turn on. Tomorrow morning I'll have to take it to the Apple store and pray that they can get it turned on to save everything. The last time I backed it up was before the weekend, so at least we have the important stuff. ☺

UTNE TURNS A NEW PAGE

With the venerable *Utne* selling out, what hope do smaller independent titles have in a changing media landscape?

By Jo Ellen Green Kaiser

When *Utne* magazine was bought recently by Ogden Publications, the indie-magazine world lost a collective heartbeat. *Utne* was founded to be the voice of alternative media, reprinting articles from indies big and small, alongside original essays by the best indie writers. *Utne* had appeared to be successful, with a circulation of over 225,000. If *Utne*, the alternative voice, could not make it as an independent, then what of the rest of us? Did *Utne* sell itself because print magazines just can't make it financially in an online world?

To some extent, these questions are a bit premature. It's not as if *Utne* went out of business or was sold to Conde Nast. Ogden Publications is a corporation, but it's a corporation that publishes *Mother Earth News*, *Natural Home*, *Herbs for Health*, and other alternative magazines. Ogden president Bryan Welch promises not to change *Utne*'s content, and, despite a few staff cuts, the *Utne* editorial team will stay intact in their offices in Minneapolis.

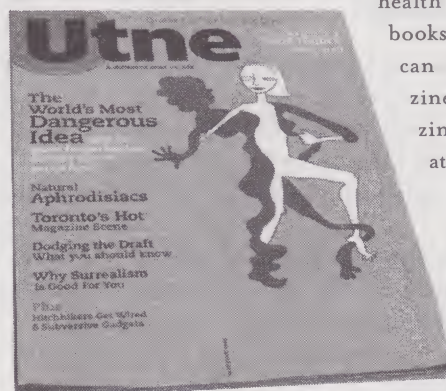
On the other hand, many in the industry knew *Utne*—a for-profit—was struggling with finances, barely able to break even, let

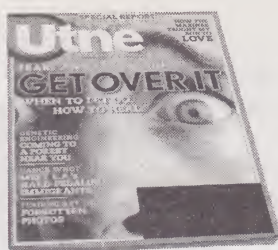
alone turn a profit. In fact, business is undeniably more difficult these days for all print magazines. Paper costs are way up, in part because it takes a lot of gas to truck paper around. The post office keeps raising rates, so it costs more to send out magazines and those annoying renewal letters. Regular business costs—like

health insurance—are also up. As mom-and-pop bookstores are replaced by chain monopolies that can influence—and often dictate—how magazines are sold, it is becoming harder for magazines to make a profit from selling single copies at bookstores.

All these mundane reasons explain the *Utne* acquisition. By joining a group of magazines, *Utne* can pool resources. Increasing volume means the magazine's staff benefits will get cheaper; paper costs will go down; and the title will have more pull with distributors. It will cut business staff, as the par-

ent company may be able to run one marketing, advertising, distribution, and circulation staff for all its magazines. The danger is that the business side will drive the editorial in this situation: Ogden is all about what its owner calls "conscien-





THE UTNE DEAL DEFINED

by Paul Davis

Founded in 1984 by Eric Utne, the magazine that came to be known as *Utne* established itself early on as a digest of the independent press, originally culling articles from across underground publishing and offering them up in a one-stop, glossy magazine. *Utne Reader*, as it was called then, reached a pinnacle in the mid '90s with a circulation of over 300,000, but in recent years has hit upon economic troubles. With declining readership in the past few years bottoming out at around 225,000 (according to industry journal *Folio*), *Utne's* recent economic troubles were long-rumored in the independent publishing world. They came to an end on June 6, however, when Ogden Publications, Inc. bought out *Utne* magazine in a move that has alarmed the independent publishing community, and initiated cries of concern for the future of the venerable pillar of the alternative press.

After years of economic troubles, *Utne's* Chief Executive Officer Nina Rothschild Utne confirmed such rumors, agreeing on June 5 to a buyout by Ogden Publications, publishers of alternative lifestyle magazines including *Mother Earth News*, *Natural Home*, and *Herbs for Health*. The decision has caused many in the independent community to question whether ownership by Ogden will dilute the content and the mission of the magazine.

Executive Editor David Schimke says that while the buyout was an economic necessity, the magazine's core mission will remain intact, and the editorial content will perhaps be better served by the economic stability the Ogden buyout affords. "Editorially, it's great news for us," Schimke states. "The editorial staff has been left intact. We've been struggling to keep afloat, and I think we lost some of our focus just trying to keep our heads above water . . . I think there will be a little less of covering things like alternative culture and medicine and go back to being more hard-nosed. It's going to go back to the route of highlighting the best of the alternative press," Schimke says.

Although he views *Utne's* folding into a larger publishing unit as unfortunate, former contributor (and current consultant for the magazine) Jeremy Adam Smith believes that it speaks to some hard realities of the economics of modern publishing. "Starting in the 1980s, there was a lot of talk and effort to build large-scale indie media enterprises—often on a for-profit model that called for 'doing well by doing good,' which, not by accident, often had roots in the Left and the counterculture but purported in various ways to be 'beyond left and right.' *Utne* was and is a part of that," explains Smith.

"In the past few years we've seen many of the print-based enterprises quietly fail or sell out—one big example is what's happened with weekly alternative newspapers, which with the New Times/Village Voice merger is reaching a near-monopoly situation," says Smith. While acknowledging the monopolistic potential of mergers such as that of New Times Newspapers and Village Voice Media in 2005, Smith believes that the *Utne* and Ogden deal is far less alarming. "Ogden is still a family-owned niche company, whose mission-driven magazines all more or less express the same herbs-and-yoga values—values that *Utne* shares," states Smith. "Ogden is nowhere close to being a monopoly in its market; New Times/Village Voice Media is deliberately adopting a Wal-Mart-like strategy of buying properties and driving indie competitors out of business. *Utne* under Ogden will rise or fall based on its ability to find what's new and innovative in the indie press and get it out to a larger audience. If Ogden helps them to do that, it could help the entire indie press."

Schimke urges those who fear this is an example of the independents following the same conglomeration model of the mainstream media to let *Utne's* upcoming work speak for itself. "I know this might all sound like a line, but I came here before we got purchased. I'd say to people that they should just keep reading us—I think they'll find we'll be tougher and more focused, if anything."

tious lifestyle" magazines, and the advertisers they pull in want to buy into a lifestyle magazine. But is *Utne* a lifestyle magazine? Or is it an indie digest?

As a digest, *Utne* has had a special problem with the web. *Utne's* circulation is down from a high of 300,000, doubtless because many readers are finding all they need online. Ten years ago, if you wanted to find out what was going on in alternative media, you had to turn to the *Utne Reader*, where the amazing Chris Dodge reads over 2,000 different titles a year and would let you know what was going on and read the best. Now, you surf the web, set up RSS feeds to your preferred sites, and probably are just as inter-

glare, it's annoying to have to scroll down through a long piece, and it's even more annoying if you are trying to concentrate while ads are popping in and out. The web is not really a quiet place. Meanwhile, print is friendly. It's not just that there is less ambient noise. You can fold down corners, you can roll up the whole thing, you can cut pages out—make something personal in a way that is very different from personalizing a web page.

In concrete terms, what this means is that print magazines will be most successful when they either focus on deep analysis of contemporary issues or provide a shared space for enthusiasts. This magazine does both—and most successful

"The web is not really a quiet place. Meanwhile, print is friendly. It's not just that there is less ambient noise. You can fold down corners, you can roll up the whole thing, you can cut pages out—make something personal in a way that is very different from personalizing a web page."

ested in blogs as you are in indie-press magazines.

Utne tried to forestall the inevitable by accommodating the Internet. They have experimented with numerous different web formats to put their magazine online and more recently have tried adjusting their editorial model to fit this new digital era. That's one reason the magazine has gone from being primarily a digest (*The Utne Reader*) to a vanilla progressive lifestyle magazine (*Utne* magazine). But once *Utne* is no longer mainly a "reader," what makes it different from any other progressive lifestyle magazine? *Utne* never really figured that out.

And that's the answer to the digital/print question. Print magazines can't just assume they are the only media available. They have to offer readers something different from the web experience. The web is excellent at 24-7 news and any other information (like the dealer-value on a car) or entertainment (there's a reason XXX makes money) you need Right Now. The web also is great for checking out what other people are thinking and making first contact with something that interests you.

What the web can't yet do—and maybe won't be able to do, although the jury is out—is offer a deep pool for reflection and immersion in what we care most about. The web is a rave, a march, a fair; print magazines are a visit to someone's house, a hike with friends. It is a question of technology: on the web, it's hard to concentrate on a long piece of analysis when you've got screen

independent magazines are likewise niche magazines for people of a well-defined persuasion.

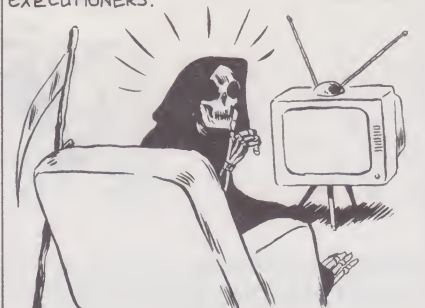
Can this model remain financially viable? What the industry knows and you may not is that most online magazines don't make money. They may be wildly popular and accrue thousands of hits, but unless they offer something we need Right Now (whether that's porn or recipes) in business terms no one has found a way to monetize them. Think about it. Online zines really can only sell ads on their home and other main pages, which limits ad revenue. None of us is willing to pay to subscribe (unless they are offering information we need Right Now). And no one has figured out any other way to make money.

The little secret of the media world is that corporate media are using their free sites as a way to get you to subscribe to print magazines. They can only make money if you go to print, and that's how they see their economy going for the foreseeable future. What that means is that small, independent niche publications that know their audience and have a defined mission have a better chance of surviving in today's media world than Conde Nast's hulking giants.

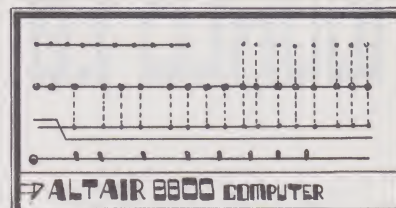
All this does not necessarily offer relief for *Utne*. As a digest, *Utne* would probably survive best as a blog by Chris Dodge. As a progressive lifestyle magazine . . . well, *Utne* will need to define itself better, and probably shrink to fit its audience, if it is going to survive. ©

WORLD 2.0

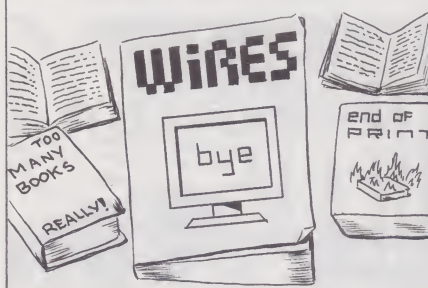
THE DEATH OF PRINT HAS BEEN ANNOUNCED COUNTLESS TIMES. VARIOUS MEDIA - RADIO, FILM, TV - HAVE BEEN NAMED AS POTENTIAL EXECUTIONERS.



SINCE THE 1976 BUSINESS WEEK PROPHECY OF THE PAPERLESS OFFICE, THE DIGITAL COMPUTER HAS INHERITED THE EXECUTIONER'S HOOD.



TODAY, AFTER A FEW FALSE STARTS AND SOME GROWING PAINS, THE COMPUTER SEEMS FINALLY UP TO THE TASK. THAT IS IF WE BELIEVE THE MOUNTAIN OF PRINTED MATTER ON THE SUBJECT.



THERE ARE MANY GOOD ARGUMENTS FOR GOING DIGITAL: SEARCHABILITY, METADATA, HYPERLINKS, PRESERVATION OF OLD MATERIAL.

death of print

Search™

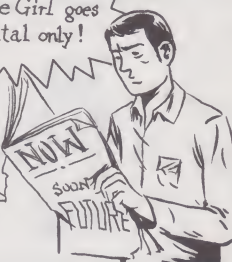
THE SIGNS SEEM TO SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES.

Advertising money is leaving print!

75,000 new blogs created every day!

Elle Girl goes digital only!

Little boxes can store millions of volumes! Take that, Library of Congress!



SMELLING IMMINENT VICTORY THE PRO-DIGITAL CROWD HAS BECOME SHRILL AND EVANGELICAL. A DIGITAL CRUSADE IS AFOOT TO RID THE WORLD OF ALL THAT QUAIN'T PRINT.

PRINT IS WHERE WORDS GO TO DIE!

JEFF JARVIS

IN THE EVOLVED MINDS OF THE DIGITAL CRUSADERS THE WORLD (QUAIN'TLY REFERRED TO AS MEAT-SPACE) AS WE KNOW IT IS OUTDATED. IT NEEDS AN UPGRADE.

THE BRAIN IS A THREE-POUND COMPUTER MADE OF MEAT.

COMPUTERS WILL EXCEED THE POWER OF THE BRAIN BY 2020.

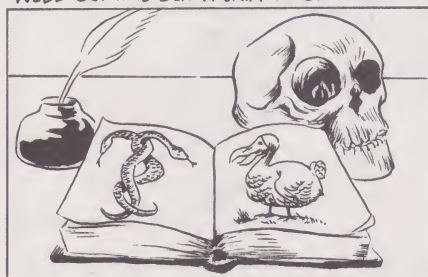
MARVIN MINSKY

RAY KURZWEIL

PRINT IS ONLY THE FIRST CASUALTY AS WE APPROACH THE AMBIGUOUS, MESSIAH-LIKE SINGULARITY EVENT HORIZON...

BEYOND WHICH WE WILL TRANSCEND OUR MEAT BODIES IN TECHNO-RAPTURE AND BECOME IMMORTAL ENTITIES OF LUMINESCENT DATA.

THIS IS WHY PRINT MUST GO THE WAY OF THE DODO. PRINT IS TOO SOLID, TOO MEATY... YOU'D THINK WE'RE STILL WRITING ON PARCHMENT. TO THE DIGERATI WE MIGHT AS WELL BE. IT IS BUT A SKIN TO BE SHED.



THERE IS NO NEED TO CRY. PRINT IS GOING TO A BETTER PLACE. WE WILL MEET AGAIN IN WORLD 2.0.

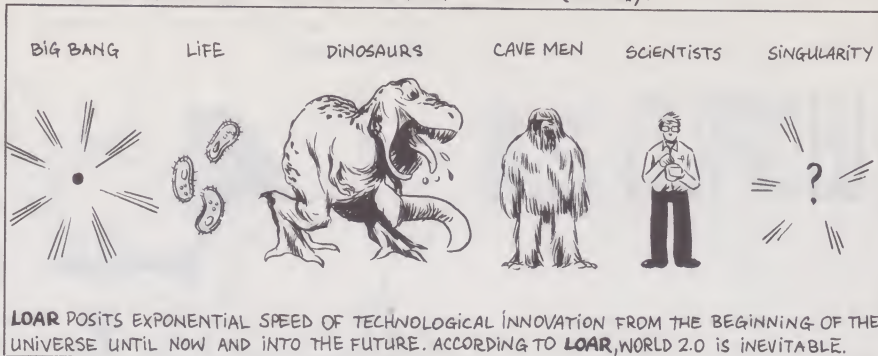


IT SEEMS INEVITABLE. THE DEATH OF PRINT IS REALLY UPON US. AND IT'S GOOD™.

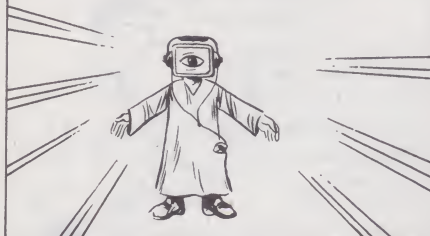


WORLD 1.0

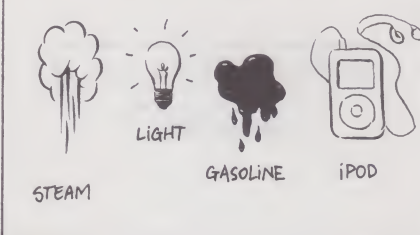
THE WORLD 2.0 SCENARIO IS BEING PRESENTED AS AN EVOLUTIONARY CERTAINTY. IT IS SHROUDED BY THE NEO-DARWINIAN "LAW OF ACCELERATING RETURNS" (**LOAR**).



LOAR HAS BECOME ONE OF THE KEY THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS FOR OUR INFINITE GROWTH CAPITALISM. IT JUSTIFIES UNFETTERED TECHNOLOGICAL PROGRESS IN THE EYES OF ITS ADHERENTS AND IT FUELS A NEAR RELIGIOUS FAITH IN TECHNOLOGY AS SAVIOR.



TECHNOLOGY HAS ALWAYS BEEN PRESENTED AS A UTOPIAN AGENT. SINCE THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION WE HAVE GONE THROUGH A SERIES OF TECHNO-REVOLUTIONS THAT SUPPOSEDLY CHANGED EVERYTHING FOR THE BETTER.



SATANIC STEEL MILLS, PLAGUES, POLLUTION, NUCLEAR WEAPONS, CUBE FARMS, GLOBAL WARMING ARE JUST THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG OF THE UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES THAT HAS ACCOMPANIED OUR "PROGRESS."



THE ERA OF FRICTIONLESS FINANCE, THE GLOBAL MARKET, INFORMATION ECONOMY AND THE DELUGE OF CONSUMER GOODS HAS ONLY BEEN MADE POSSIBLE BY AN UNPRECEDENTED USE OF OUR PLANETARY RESOURCES.



THE COMPUTER OF 2020—MORE POWERFUL THAN THE HUMAN BRAIN—WILL BE THE SUPREME ACCOMPLISHMENT OF A CIVILIZATION THAT IS ALREADY STRAINING THE CAPACITY OF THE BIOSPHERE TO SUSTAIN US.



IT'S HARD NOT TO DRAW PARALLELS TO THE FATE OF THE EASTER ISLAND CIVILIZATION. AS THE ISLANDS ECOLOGY WAS COLLAPSING, IT'S PEOPLE KEPT ERECTING MASSIVE STATUES (MOAI), WHICH FURTHER STRAINED THEIR ABILITY TO SURVIVE.



HOW DID THE CHIEFS JUSTIFY THE VAST MOAI PROJECT? DID THEY HAVE A **LOAR**?



THE WORLD 2.0 PROJECT IS STILL FIRMLY ANCHORED IN WORLD 1.0: PLANET EARTH. WITHOUT WORLD 1.0 THERE IS NO WORLD 2.0.



WORD WORLD III

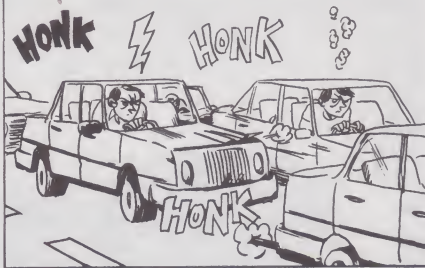
TODAY'S TECHNOLOGY IS ONLY A PALE REFLECTION OF THE PROMISED UTOPIA.



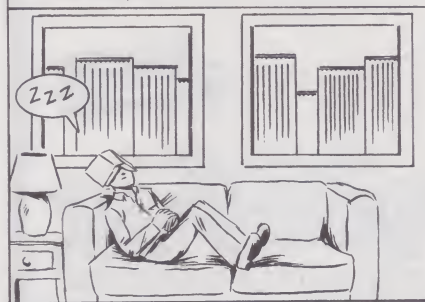
WE HAVE FOUND OURSELVES IN A WORLD OF TECHNOLOGICAL MARVELS THAT MAKE US A LOT OF MONEY, BUT ALSO MAKE US MISERABLE.



WHEN WE SPEND ALL OUR TIME INSIDE OF NETWORKS, VEHICLES, CUBICLES, TVS, CUL-DE-SACS WE GET NOSTALGIC, MELANCHOLY, DEPRESSED, HYSTERICAL, NEUROTIC.



TO GET BETTER WE NEED MEATSPACE. WE NEED TO BREATHE, EAT, SHIT, FUCK, AND SLEEP. WE NEED TEXTURE, FLAVOR, ORGASMS, FRAGRANCE, LOVE, NAPS...



MEATSPACE IS ANCIENT, SLOW, AWKWARD, UGLY, BEAUTIFUL, SUBLIME, HUMAN.



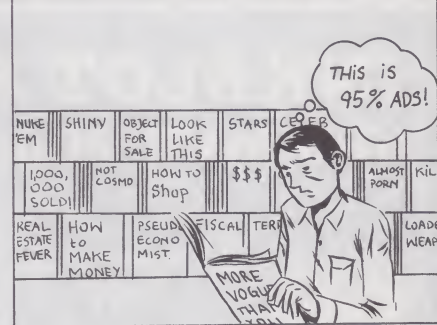
PRINT IS ALSO TECHNOLOGY. ANCIENT TECHNOLOGY. MEATSPACE TECHNOLOGY. HUMAN TECHNOLOGY.



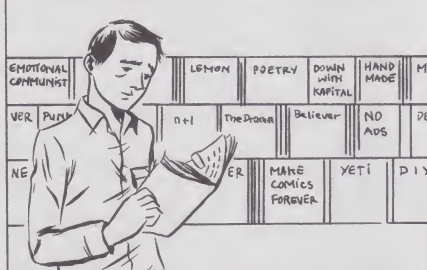
BOOKS, COMICS, ZINES. WE CAN READ THEM AT OUR OWN PACE. WE CAN READ THEM ANYWHERE. BATH, BEACH, MOUNTAIN, FOREST. WE CAN STILL READ THEM THROUGH SPILLED COFFEE STAINS.



LET THEM HAVE THEIR BLOGS, MULTIMEDIA ENCYCLOPEDIAS, ONLINE PHONEBOOKS, CELEBRITY GOSSIP MAGAZINES, AD DOLLARS.



WE'LL KEEP THE NOVELS, COMICS, JOURNALS AND POETRY. WITHOUT THE PRESSURE TO FILL PAGES WITH ADS, CELEBRITIES AND BEST-SELLERS THE PRINT MEDIUM CAN RECOVER ITS "LOST" AURA.



WE ARE INCESSANTLY TOLD TO "GO DIGITAL" BUT IN THE END WE MAY PREFER TO "GO PALEOLITHIC". INDEED WE MAY NOT HAVE THE LUXURY OF A CHOICE.



BIBLIOGRAPHY :

The Age of Spiritual Machines
by Ray Kurzweil

Technosis by Erik Davis

So Many Books by Gabriel Zaid

buzzmachine.com by Jeff Jarvis

Collapse by Jared Diamond

T.A.Z. by Hakim Bey

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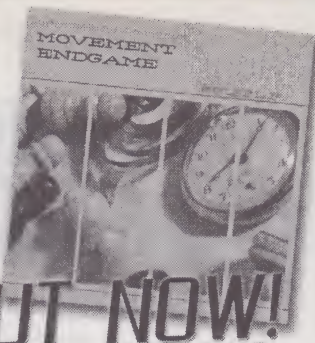
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Brutal hardcore with a classic grindcore and black metal influence. This is the new project from Dave Witte of Discordance Axis and ex-members of Black Army Jacket and Milhouse.

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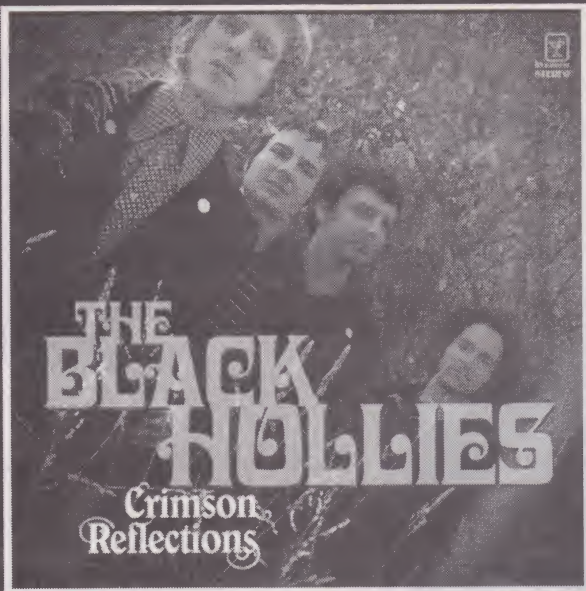
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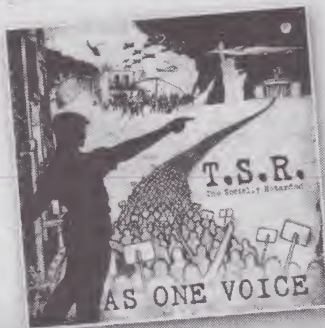
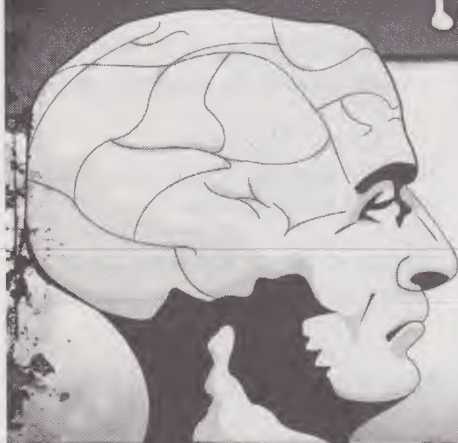
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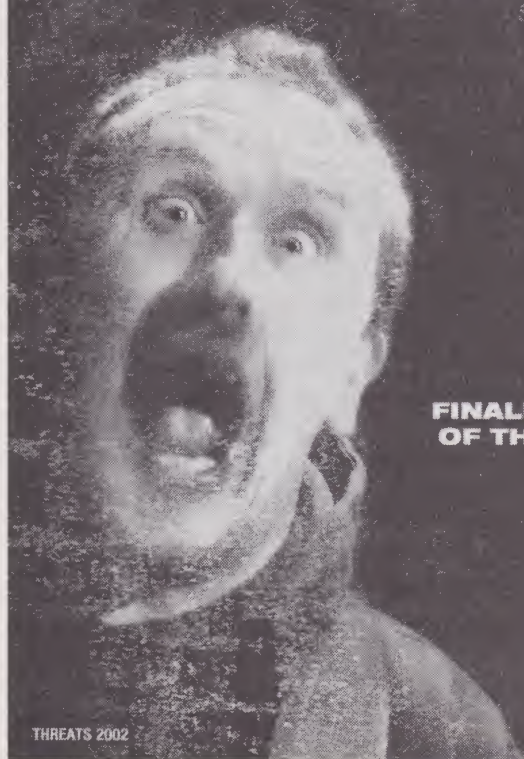
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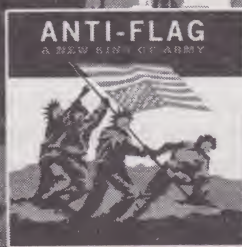
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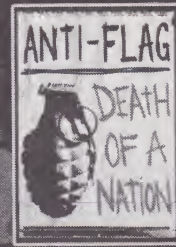
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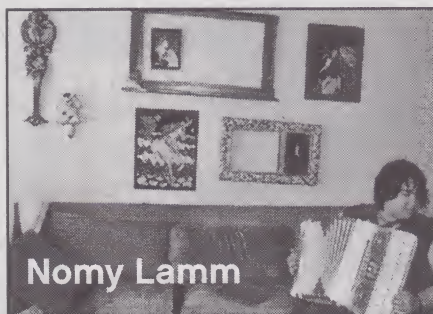
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Clothing. The City of Mind Your Own Business. The City of Get Used To It.

If you want to have an experience that will challenge your core and force you to get real, I say, move to Chicago when you're 27-30 years old. Known to the astrologically-minded as the Saturn Return, this span of time usually offers endless challenges that provide you with opportunities to get your shit together and become the person you think you are. Whatever you think is the "right" and "good" way to be in the world, watch it crumble under the weight of your pretension. I moved from Olympia to Chicago thinking I was going to help create something here that didn't already exist. I didn't know how hard Chicago would be on a young idealist.

Lacking the euphoric stimulant of mountains, trees, and a tight-knit artistic community, I found myself going further and further inside myself, looking for that elusive thing that I call magic. To my mind, magic is how it feels when one moment flows naturally into the next, revealing exactly what you need at exactly the right time. It's not true, though I could have assumed, that there is no magic in Chicago. Reality is heavy, but if you stay with it, there is a lot to be found.

And so, rather than try to explain my experience categorically, let me instead pay homage to my top ten most magical places in Chicago. I'm not saying you will have the same experience if you go there. But these have been the places that kept me feeling like I could still trust the part of me that wants to be connected to something other than concrete and industry. History. Creation. A sense of belonging.

10) THE MUSIC BOX THEATER. Goodbye to the too-small theater seats, the red velvet curtains and gold detailing, the live

After almost four years in Chicago, I'm getting ready to take myself back to the west coast. How do you say goodbye to a whole city? The City of Layered

organist, the pinlight stars and the projections of clouds that drift across the ceiling. For all its decadence, somehow it always feels kind of stifled and unsure of itself. Maybe I have high standards when it comes to turn-of-the-century vaudeville theaters, but how can a 100-year-old haunted movie theater survive in a neighborhood full of yuppies? I never saw or felt the ghost of the old proprietor but I took comfort in the legend of his presence, and imagined he was wringing his hands at the hoards of blonde ponytails, and feeling relieved at an accordion-playing freak (me) moving in downstairs from the palm reader across the street.

9) EARLY TO BED. Searah is the friendliest face in queer Chicago, and her store is a community-builder's dream—a sex toy store that holds workshops and stitch 'n' bitches, that produces porn and opens its doors to compatible visions. Goodbye to those twinkling lights, pastel walls, vibrating toys and pretend wieners that served as the venue for the monthly queer open mike that I co-hosted for a year and a half. I will miss the anal health demonstrations, the tassel twirling, the paddles, restraints, and chocolate body paint, and most of all, the sense of lightness.

8) BLUEROOM STUDIO. A practice space that rents by the hour, historically an old blues spot from the '60s and '70s called "The Dungeon," tucked away in an alley of downtown near where the horse-drawn carriages line up by the old water tower. Goodbye to the flooded basement full of electrical equipment, to blown-out-speakers, ever-rotating drumsets, and the mole-like proprietor who told us we could hold séances down there if we wanted. (This was comforting after our last practice space—a heavy-metal haven full of dudes who didn't know how to flush their own shit down the toilet—where we once got caught sitting in the dark around a candle, eyes closed, humming meditatively.)

7) MARRAKECH EXPRESSO. Goodbye to my favorite neighborhood cafe, its delicious Moroccan coffee that comes on a silver tray, its floor cushions and sofas, its tuna pita with corn and cayenne pepper, and its hookah with apple-flavored tobacco that made my stomach hurt. One of my favorite places to rendezvous, particularly with out of towners, I love them for being commu-

nity supporters, and for hosting Scott Free's weekly queer performance showcase. I have overheard thespians practicing their plays, and listened to Irish-sounding music by some guys who seemed to have just run into each other. One night, walking home from the Marrakech Cafe, I had the strangest feeling as if I was going to walk through a membrane into another reality. I wrote a song about never knowing what is going to happen. A couple months later, I performed it on their makeshift stage.

6) KITTY MOON. The first time my friends came in here to check it out and see if it was a good place to play a show, the owner wasn't there. In fact, nobody who worked there was there. In fact, the regulars were behind the bar, pouring drinks and taking money. This is my kind of place. Blue walls, chandeliers, and a resident dog make this the friendliest, coziest bar I've found in Chicago. Our first show here happened to have the highest concentration of natural redheads in my known social history—what this means I cannot say but it was very exciting for our red-haired violinist.

5) THE PIANO ROOMS AT THE HAROLD WASHINGTON LIBRARY. On the eighth floor of this impressive brick building with the green gargoyles perched on top, you can check into a piano room for an hour and play for free. Hearing people from the next room over can be both inspiring and intimidating, since I tend to play the same five songs I've known since I was twelve. My favorite thing to do is just mess around, improvise, and trance out, playing something simple and repetitive and singing along. Me and my ex-boyfriend once played "Lean on Me" for like a half hour. Oh yeah, but don't try to make out in there. The guard will come tapping on the window and make you stop.

4) THE WALK ALONG RAVENSWOOD BETWEEN FOSTER AND AINSLIE. There are steps that lead up to this rather depressing, scraggly little trail next to a chain link fence that runs along the Metra tracks. But make no mistake, this is a nature trail, and do not doubt the power of nature—there are some tough little bunnies that live up there, and I've hung out with them. They don't even run when the train goes by. They do, I hear, run from coyotes that supposedly also live up there, but I haven't seen them.

3) ITALO-AMERICAN ACCORDIONS IN OAK LAWN. The owner, Ann, is in her late 70s, and she has confessed to me that she doesn't even know if she likes accordions. "It's all my family ever talked about," she said, smoking her long cigarette, gesturing around the shop that her father started when she was a kid. But she can sure pick 'em—she's the one who told me "try that one" when I came in looking for something far less substantial than what I walked out with—a pearly white and gold 120-bass Lira. She says in all her years in the accordion business, she has never seen someone who played the accordion backwards like I do.

2) THE CREPE AND COFFEE PALACE. An Algerian-owned café in the annoying Lincoln Park neighborhood, this is my favorite restaurant in Chicago. Delicious savory crepes with avocados, goat cheese, spinach, cashews, basil and portabella, devoured while sipping Turkish coffee. This was where my girlfriend and I had our first few dates—every week, same time, same place, we'd sit for hours and talk about politics, philosophy, who we are and how we do things. One time the ponytailed guy who was working heard me absent-mindedly humming along with the music. He said "you like this music? It's Spanish Jewish music from the 1400s. It's music of resistance. The inquisition, they killed the ones who didn't believe. Can you believe that?"

1) GRACELAND JEWISH CEMETARY. One of many cemeteries that stretch along Clark street, this one is lush, green, at times overgrown and unruly, with most grave markers dating back to the early part of the century. This is one space that I can always trust to be exactly what it is, to want nothing from me but my peace. I have spent two birthdays in this cemetery—one with friends, and one alone. I've practiced here with my band, once almost getting locked in for the night. I've wandered around in rain, snow and sun, getting to know the arrangements of families in their graves, wondering about their stories, trying to absorb whatever they might be telling me through the soil.

I believe in what I can feel, sense, and experience. This reality is so often discounted, by ourselves, by television, by friends and family, by teachers, by . . . by . . .

Goodbye Chicago. I believe in you.



I got a letter from Jake today. He sounded good. As good as can be expected and inferred from 27 lines of black ink on a cheesy card with a painting of puppies and kitties on the front. The

card is so cheesy a good portion of Jake's note was spent commenting on it and distancing himself from its overall design and use. The surely unintentional hinting of interspecies group sex was not missed nor directly commented on by either of us. But, as Jake said, what's he supposed to do when he's on house arrest with no Internet at his mother's home awaiting sentencing?

On March 2nd, 2006 a jury in New Jersey found Jake and five other activists guilty of multiple federal felonies. He was tried under the Animal Enterprise Protection Act (formerly the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act). Don't let his questionable taste in stationary fool you, Jake is a terrorist (according to our government).

I avoided the video footage for a long time. I'd walked past it many times at various events when one group or another was showing it at their table. I'd stood near it but I couldn't get myself to turn around and watch it. I could hear the dogs squealing and crying on the video and I had to concentrate hard to not look. I'm vegan; I'm against animal testing. I don't need to see that beagle getting punched in the face, do I? Don't I get a pass on that particular clip because I religiously check my bread packaging for animal products? And the clip of the lab technician yelling in the crying dog's face to shut up as he shakes him so violently the dog's head is snapping back and forth? Can I sit that one out?

As I sat down to start this column, Jake's disgusting companion animal sex orgy card propped up next to my monitor for inspiration, I figured I needed to watch the footage. (It's not hard to find on the Internet, just search "Huntington Life Sciences video" and it will come up.) If Jake and several other friends were looking at up to 20 years in prison for trying to help the animals in that footage, the least I could do was look at the video. Whatever emotional trauma I might experience is nothing compared to that of the animals whose whole lives are spent, and deaths delivered, in those labs.

Huntington Life Sciences is a for-hire animal-testing lab based in the UK with operations here in the US. They'll test anything for anybody. They have tested cigarettes, household cleaners, food coloring, and that life saving artificial sweetener, Splenda—12,800 dogs, rats, rabbits, monkeys, and mice died in the testing process, but it's all worth it in the unfuckwithable name of progress and calorie cutting.

Huntington has been repeatedly exposed for abusing the animals in its care. The beagle-punching footage is not an isolated incident. Not even close. Which makes it all the harder to watch.

The last card I got from Jake had an oily, hairless, very buff, very tan gentleman on the front. He was lying on his stomach, wearing only hot pink spandex short shorts. I got this card just after Jake's conviction. He wanted to say thanks for all the fundraising that had been going on for him and his fellow defendants. There were events all over the country—art shows, craft fairs, dinners, concerts and so forth.

Jake and his co-defendants, collectively known as the SHAC 7 (SHAC stands for Stop Huntington Animal Cruelty) were convicted and will be serving federal prison time for advocating the closure of Huntington Life Sciences. In the campaign to shut down HLS a lot of not-so-friendly tactics have been employed. Some windows were broken. Some private property was vandalized. Some threats were made. Some people came home from a long day at work killing puppies and found groups of protesters outside their homes calling them puppy killers. A lot of testimony in the trial came from the targets of these protests and how they were made to feel by the people who wanted them to stop killing puppies.

The trial was supposed to take three months. It took only two weeks for the New Jersey jury (I don't reckon I need to mention how holding the trial in a state that relies heavily on animal testing for revenue and jobs might bias a jury and trial) to return verdicts of guilty on all counts. This, despite the fact that none of the government's witnesses could identify any of the defendants as having personally done anything. In fact, none of the defendants were actually charged with throwing anything, breaking anything, slashing anything, spray painting anything, or threatening anybody.

What they were charged and found guilty of and will now possibly spend years in jail for was running a website that advocated the shutting down of Huntington, crossing state lines to attend legal demonstrations, and sending black faxes (black sheets of paper sent through a fax machine generally done after office hours resulting in the untold horror of the office workers arriving to work the next morning without any toner left in their fax machine) to companies that worked with HLS. I know, pure evil. Bin Laden himself shudders just thinking about tactics like these.

Years in federal prison for sending faxes. What is going on here? According to the US attorney for New Jersey in this case, Christopher Christie, "Our goal is to remove uncivilized people from civilized society." Which begs the question: if you punch puppies in the face for money, are you more civilized than someone who tries to stop you? Apparently you are if you work for a big, multinational corporation that provides the masses with sweeteners for their overpriced coffee at Starbucks.

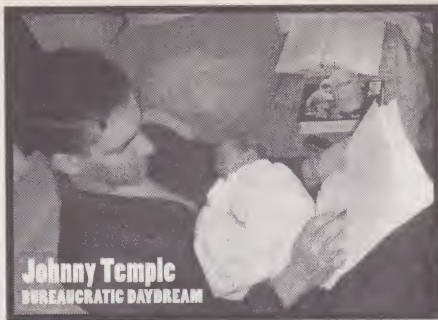
The government, with this case, is trying to silence protesters and intimidate them out of using their First Amendment rights to directly confront oppressors, exploiters, and abusers. The oppressors and exploiters—all big corporations—represent too much commercial interest and revenue for the government not to step in and protect them. Silencing free speech protects business. As Steven Best said, this case "Should be a serious wake-up call to everyone: this is post-Constitutional America."

And why should you care? Because the SHAC trial was a test case for the government to see how much they could abridge Constitutional rights in the name of protecting big business. Due to the extremely effective tactics of the SHAC campaign, Huntington has been on the brink of financial collapse for years. The message from the government: If you're too successful we will come after you.

How long until there's an "Environmental Enterprise Protection Act" on the books so the Feds can go after environmental activists? How long until protesting against sweatshops gets you thrown in jail? Or against our oil addiction? Against the war?

Support the SHAC 7 or you might be next.

See what I'm up to: www.herbivoremagazine.com



Several years back I wrote an opinion piece for *Publishers Weekly*, one of the book industry's main trade publications, expressing my concern that "BookScan" marketing technology would hurt the busi-

ness. As bass player in Girls Against Boys, I had seen how SoundScan technology had wreaked havoc on the livelihood of many musicians. SoundScan offers a system whereby *actual* sales can be tracked based on reports from record stores and other retail venues. Before SoundScan, record labels could only keep a count of how many copies of a new CD had been shipped to *stores*, but not how many had actually been bought by customers.

SoundScan "revolutionized" the industry in the 1990s by giving record companies a much greater sense of where, geographically, their music was selling. While the technology supposedly allowed the labels to become more focused in their marketing campaigns, too often the opposite occurred. Girls Against Boys was not remotely alone in the experience of having our label pull the plug on a new album just weeks after its release because the SoundScan numbers weren't huge enough. This over-reliance on immediate sales figures is at direct odds with any sort of long-term commitment to new music. With the rise of SoundScan, instead of broadening the scope of their music marketing, major labels became more and more obsessed with a single approach: trying to generate radio hits.

When I first heard that SoundScan's parent company was developing the same technology for books, I feared the worst. As with music, the book business has witnessed a dwindling number of large corporate publishers gobbling up one another in a reckless quest for a greater market share. It seemed inevitable, therefore, that the rise of BookScan would increase the pace of corporate consolidation in the industry. I had been motivated to launch my own indie publishing company, Akashic Books (www.akashicbooks.com), in part as an escape from the crumbling music business, so I wasn't exactly thrilled to find that publishing might be headed down the same path.

My concerns were well-founded; the large book publishing companies have indeed succumbed to an increased focus on the bottom line, to the detriment of creative expression. (Almost any writer published by a major house can provide some of the grisly details.)

And yet, amidst the corporate reign, there have been some unforeseen side effects of BookScan that actually bode well for indie publishers.

First and foremost, BookScan has revealed that the playing field across the business is far more level than anyone ever expected. With BookScan, one can review sales figures for almost any book out there. And it's not a pretty picture for Random House, Simon and Schuster, and the other behemoths. One of the beauties of indie publishing is the reality-based model of our businesses. Where a BookScan report showing sales of 5000 copies of a new book may be a big success for Akashic, it's likely a failure for Simon and Schuster. What's pleasantly bizarre about BookScan is the revelation that we indie publishers are often selling just as many books as the majors—and sometimes more. (One pertinent

example Akashic's list is *Hairstyles of the Damned* by Joe Meno, published on our Punk Planet Books imprint, which BookScan reveals to have far outsold the vast majority of the novels brought out by the large houses.)

Publishing is by and large a small-scale industry, so the companies that acknowledge and embrace this reality can function with greater equilibrium. And the more I study BookScan sales figures across the business, the more I recognize that the alleged advantages of the corporate publishers are often exaggerated.

I am even beginning to question the indie concept that the game is somehow "rigged" by large corporations. In some ways, the greatest challenge that we indies face in 2006 is not a deck stacked in favor of corporate publishers, but rather the monstrous glut of books being published every year. This is a fundamental challenge to all publishers, big and small.

A significant irony of this glut is that it reflects the technological advances that have facilitated DIY-style publishing. Without desktop publishing software, print-on-demand technology, and other advances widely available to the public, the book business would still be held hostage by the large companies and the ivory tower of academia. So for upstart young publishers, the trick is to lift your books above the glut . . . and then to try to find a way to cut through the corporate money game.

Sadly, many of the indie publishers with the most promise begin to ape the corporate rules once they have risen above the glut.

One of my favorite aspects of Dischord Records in DC is the way they made up their own rules as they went along, neither mimicking the major labels nor fashioning themselves in opposition to them. In all my experiences with Dischord, I rarely heard anyone complain about being "shut out" of some other side of the business. This is in sharp contrast to the trend in punk of repeatedly "proving" that the major labels suck. There's no shortage of articles in *Punk Planet* and many other punk zines "exposing" the fact that the big companies are obsessed with profits and routinely screw artists. (This may have been newsworthy in the 1980s and early 1990s, but by around 1995 underground publications were becoming as obsessed with this phenomenon as major labels were with profits—turning the whole discourse into a massive and redundant fanzine cliché.)

Dischord's purity of vision and deep comfort in playing by its own rules is a spirit sorely lacking in independent book publishing. By disengaging with the corporate structures—by refusing to be defined by them—independents can set our own standards for success.

And the truth is, I feel sorry for the people who work for major publishers. There are some very creative and smart folks at these companies, but I hear too many of them lamenting the fact that their bosses won't allow them to take "risks." As a graduate of the Dischord Records School of Culture (e.g., I was bass player in the Dischord band Soul Side in the 1980s), I can't imagine working in any capacity in either the music or book industries with hands tied by the suits upstairs. A willingness to labor under those constraints too often reflects a lack of vision, a lack of passion. And what are music and books without a passion shared by all involved . . . ?

How fortunate we indie publishers are to be able to bring out the books we love. This is a true privilege. And bitching too much about large corporations demeans that privilege, and it sells ourselves short.



Hello PUNKS! As you may have heard from a recent mass e-mail I sent about a sweet celebrities-only Labor Day party I'm throwing, I'm done—done with punk. I'm taking all the money I made

off it, investing that money into restarting my publicity firm Hopper PR, and blitzing full-time for today's last true artists: black major-label rappers and investment bankers. A lot of these bankers have the songs and the spirit but not the industry savvy, and as you know, music is first and foremost a business.

That, and obviously punk sucks now too. Let me tell you a story about how much punk has fallen in just 10 years, the time I've been here at PP: One night eight years ago me, Dave Hake and editor Anne Elizabeth Moore were eating popcorn smothered in I Can't Believe It's Not Butter, watching re-runs of our favorite show, *The Nanny*, like we do every night. We were finishing off a pack of cloves we had bought on our way to the Porno for Pyros show the night before. "Fran Drescher—she really cares about the kids, doesn't she Jay-Hopps," said the Annester. She always called me Jay-Hopps after she had a little too much wine cooler. "And you know what, Jay-Hopps?" she said, suddenly serious. "You're like the fucking Nanny of punk rock. You are doing this because of the kids. We need you." Then she kissed me and begged me never to leave the magazine.

Think about that story, and now compare it to 2006. I'm at the Punk Planet OFFICES walking around in a skirt I bought from a corporation and makeup that I bought from the department store that tests all its products on animals. Dan Sinker is in his office using the hole of the first Bikini Kill CD to jerk off all over another copy of the first Bikini Kill CD that he bought expressly for this purpose. Ben Weasel, sworn enemy of this very magazine, is videotaping Sinker, giving him the thumbs up while reading aloud old copies of *Heart Attack* over a podcast he's going to sell to Interscope. Everywhere you look a black guy is rapping about how much better the scene has gotten since Braid signed to a major. "That's true," types PP columnist Al Burian. "Now Braid has a shot at MTV, home of the real punks." I should mention I'm also videotaping this whole thing for my personal press kit, AND reading the latest copy of *Rolling Stone*, my favorite magazine.

Do you see what I'm getting at? If punk is dead on PUNK PLANET—where everything from the computers to the interns eating potato chips secretly made of Billy Joe Armstrong's foreskin are punk and planetary—what are you going to do? Pretend that My Chemical Romance isn't the best band in the world, a/k/a REAL PLANET? Pretend that me and Steve Albini *actually* hate each other? Act like I'm not five blowjobs away from turning Stephin Merritt straight again?

Even the last week—my first away from punk—has been awesome for me. Every day I'm making bands on major labels more

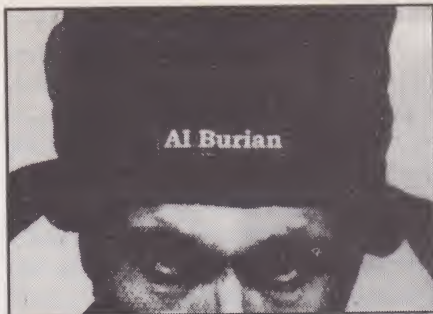
popular than ever, giving them handjobs while I write their one sheets with my abnormally long, ink-injected clitoris. I'm hanging out with major label rappers all the time now, and we're going to go to all the independent record stores in your town and switching the Dirtnap 7-inches with ziplock freezer bags of black man cum—the digitally copyright-protected kind. Good luck trying to rip this cum onto your hard drive!

Loose ends: A lot of you were pretty angry with me about that piece I wrote re: the emo rock being sexist. I felt for a lot of you, especially the 13- and 14-year-olds wearing Misfits jackets who anxiously await the arrival of *Punk Planet* to their houses so they can read the record reviews, go buy the records major-distributed indie labels pay us to recommend. But here's something else I need to tell you about that emo rock piece: I didn't write it! Silent Interscope record exec Nick Sylvester, who listens to gangsta rap and facefucks riot grrrls as if the only Le Tigre song that exists is the DFA Remix of "Deceptacon," paid me \$100 and all the Interscope band concert tickets I want to run HIS piece on emo rock. At first I was skeptical—only \$100? What about the fucking? I wanted at least a few bands from his label to do publicity for, and five fucks minimum—six fucks. Did he not know who I am? I don't do anything for less than six fucks.

Sylvester furrowed his diamond-encrusted brow (the diamonds were bought using the money from the last Trail of Dead album), then asked me point-blank: "Are you a person who understands the importance of advertising dollars influencing the content of magazines?"

I knew the answer to that one: "You mean, am I a *real* punk?" He smiled and furrowed his brow again, dropping a few diamonds into my designer-clothed pussy. "Here's what I'll do for you. You run my provocative piece on sexist emo rock. I'll give you my worst bands to do publicity for—and six fucks. If you trick people into thinking my terrible bands are actually good, I'll see what I can do about more fucks." I was so happy I told him to write the rest of my columns, including this one. "OK I'll do that. See you at the Gwen Stefani concert," he said. A year later we're still on fuck five—that's how good this column's been since Nick took it over. Remember, emo isn't short for "emotional," it's long for "o"—the shape of my vag after Nick bags my *Punk Planet* pussy 50 Cent-style.

Some parting words. One, always obey your parents, especially if you're a girl punk. If you're a girl punk and want to be successful in life, take your parents' advice and fuck your way to the top. Two, go to church. There's a fine line between fake punks like Gorilla Biscuits and real punks like Lenny Kravitz and the chick who plays drums in the "Are You Gonna Go My Way?" video, which is that Kravitz and that chick go to church pretty much every Sunday. Church is a time to reflect on the big questions in punk rock today. Where is my white belt made out of the drummer from Green Day's vegan foreskin? Where is my other white belt with the sassy vagina I drew on it? What would punk Jesus do? Well! Punk Jesus would find those two white belts, trade them in for nice black leather belts that businessmen wear, then casually use his stigmata to jerk himself off all over your town's next punk-rock flea market. It's gonna be the biggest major label deal of all time.



Berlin scene report: the walls of the buildings are crumbling, dusty, covered with graffiti and stencil art. Gentrification can't quite keep up with entropy, or so it would appear. Although construc-

tion sites and cranes are ubiquitous, and the rush to build new things is feverish, one can't escape the past, a sense of the place that was. Berlin oozes history out of every pore. And there is art everywhere. The sensory overload of the street art is so unlike the streets of Chicago, where graffiti blasters are on the scene with an efficiency you don't find in public transit or ambulances, to sandblast away any trace of the population's creative impulses, as if any open display of such creativity might tear the tenuous fabric of society asunder, might lead to something dangerous and unknown.

...

Kunsthalle Tacheles, a huge multi-story art complex in the center of trendy Mitte, looks like some half-crumbled post-apocalyptic fortress amidst the chi-chi restaurants and boutiques encircling it. Erected in 1907 as a shopping mall, the building was converted to administrative offices for the Nazi party in the '30s, and then was bombed to bits during World War II. It sat half-ruined throughout the communist era, giant chunks missing, walls jagged. The East German government lacked either the will or the finances to refurbish it.

In 1990, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, and with the beginning of the reconstruction boom, the hulking hull of a former shopping mall was slated for demolition. But there were other forces at work in the city, too: the emerging post-communist counter-culture, emboldened by their newfound creative elbow room but still not quite clear on the mechanics of capitalism, began squatting the empty, derelict buildings of Berlin. Out of the rubble, a new world was being concocted, cafes and art galleries were popping up, all-night dance parties were being run on generators, hardcore shows were happening while the police stood feebly outside, unable to force their way in, unsure of what to do. The feeling in those days seemed to be that anything was possible, that the limits of what was doable were the limits of the imagination. It was a compelling myth.

When the building was taken over and renamed Tacheles, after a Yiddish word meaning to reveal, or to bring to a close, it very quickly became the nexus for a new and radical art movement, emphasizing spontaneity, improvisation, freedom of action. Artists from all over the world began showing work and staging performances there. Within a few years the art space was internationally recognized to the point where removing the squatters and demolishing the building became an impossibility. And so, the German government cut a deal, gave them funding, made it a tourist attraction. Now, the place houses a movie theater, a cafe and bar, and serves as a conversation piece for the gentrified art scene in the area.

I can remember how much it impressed me, in the early '90s, when I first saw it. A four-story high squatted building devoted to artistic expression and spontaneity! I had never seen anything like it. By that time, things were already past their heyday, and the era of the squats was winding down. Tacheles, I realize now, is sort of

the Green Day of squatted buildings— to the true believers, it is a symbol more of co-option than transcendence. But still, for me, at that time— you have to understand, I grew up in Durham, North Carolina, near Northgate mall. My imagination of what could be had been crushed into cubes, became no more than the hope of a flickering moment of freedom, a stolen 10 minutes or half an hour outside of the infrastructure. I had never thought of re-envisioning space in that way—of seeing the world physically transformed into something I recognized. Squatting represented a fundamental challenge to all kinds of ingrained notions—private property, the domestic unit, the borders between art and life. But Tacheles seems a little silly now, a building purposefully left half-destroyed to evoke the spirit of its founding.

...

Sitting in a bar with my friend Barbara. She is telling me about her former roommate who never washed the dishes. Then he washed them once and complained that he always washes the dishes. He complains! That he always does the dishes! She gets really angry as she retells the story. These are the kinds of people I have to put up with! It drives you crazy!

I know it, I say. Everyone around me seems a little wrong and malfunctioning, screws seem slightly loose. All you can do is keep on your toes, watch for the wild fluxes in one direction or the other, try to adjust your own spin accordingly. She tells me about her family troubles, how she hates her sister, how her worst fear in life is that her sister might come to visit. She tells me about all the times she's thought about killing her mother—then gets so flustered thinking about it that she has to stop talking for a few minutes. We sit in silence. One less thing to talk about.

South American authors doesn't work out very well either. I can't think of any. Gabriel Garcia Marquez? Is he South or Central American? Barbara talks to me about books all the time. This is the typical problem of making a fanzine—people ask you what you do, you show them your fanzine, and they misinterpret the object, they see the words printed on the page and make the assumption that you are interested in reading and literature. In reality I hardly read at all, and I barely write.

"Why are you so hung up on punk?" She wants to know. She's picked up on that from reading the fanzine. I guess I do fly that flag on my sleeve, and I'm not sure why, myself—I suppose I had thought it was a universalizer, a way of connecting with like-minded people, but now, I realize more and more, it's just as likely a way to alienate yourself from people.

"I was one of the first punks in Berlin, you know," says Barbara. "A friend of mine brought it over here from England. She said, 'hey, you should check this out, punk, it means doing whatever you want. It's fat chicks in half-shirts that say fuck on them, or whatever. So I got into it for a few months. But then, I went to the shows, and it was just fashion, and yelling 'NO FUTURE;' there was really nothing behind it. So that was it for punk, for me."

Barbara has done it all already, or so she claims. I remember talking to Joseph Krepelka about this—he got the same line of argument from the Czech punks who came and went, and he said, "yeah, of course, shows are boring if you don't get involved in doing it, if you are just the audience." But I am not sure if Joseph and I are happier than Barbara, or if happiness is even the goal. We wake up from our dreams, in which the malls become autonomous zones, and we find that we are all just broken buildings. ©



In the 1980s, when I was living, as Ben Weasel memorably put it, "nine miles up the side of a god-dam mountain," I would occasionally drive my niece and nephew and some of the other moun-

tain kids to school in the nearest town some 18 miles away.

The first half of the drive was on winding dirt roads and had to be done in second gear, and took about 35 minutes on average, provided we weren't contending with snowdrifts or mudslides. The kids—most of them, anyway—wrestled and screamed their heads off, but my niece would be curled up way in the back with a notebook that she meticulously filled with drawings and hand-lettered stories.

I can't remember how old she was when she started this. No more than 10 or 12, if that, and she kept at it all the way through high school and beyond. Meanwhile I was keeping some notebooks of my own, mostly scribbled rants about politics, music and the environment, and turning them into the first issues of a rudimentary magazine called *Lookout*.

There was no art, no illustration, barely even any design to those early issues. I had no talent for things like that, and barely any knowledge of them. My publishing method was to type—on an actual typewriter, I mean—as many words as I could fit onto a letter-sized sheet of paper, photocopy as many pages as I could afford, staple them together, and pass them out to anyone who might be willing to read them.

The nearest Xerox machine was 40 miles away in the feed and grain store. It was located in the fertilizer section; if you walked in on me when I was putting together one of those early *Lookouts*, you would have found the pages of my budding magazine piled atop the manure bags as I copied and collated. Some found that very symbolic.

Eventually I discovered modern photocopiers down in San Francisco that could shrink and enlarge. I'd reduce my copy to a barely readable size, cut it up into pieces, and paste them onto a page. That way I could get two or three times as much into an issue.

The trouble with that approach was that if I didn't calculate the proportions correctly—and I never was too great at math—I could end up with dozens of pages that didn't fit and had to be typed all over again. This usually happened in the wee hours of the night before I was planning on printing the damn thing.

So when I heard that these newfangled Apple computers could do all that stuff and more without me even having to think about it, I didn't need much convincing. As soon as I could afford it, I got one of those television-sized machines with the astounding memory capacity of half a megabyte, and set about teaching myself to use it.

On my first attempt it took me 12 hours to produce and print a sheet of paper that said, "This is a test of my new computer" in 18-point Times boldface. So much for time and labor-saving, but I gradually got better at it, and by 1988 I was able to produce a 32-page and eventually a 64-page newsprint magazine pretty much all by myself.

Well, except the art, of course, which there was still a scarcity of. But people who for some reason liked my articles started sending me pictures I could use. My design theory—if I'd had one, which I didn't—was completely function-over-form, and if people

complained that the *Lookout* was nothing but pages and pages of words with an occasional photo or drawing to interrupt the flow, I'd accuse them of having the attention span of an illiterate hamster and go on doing things the way I always had.

Meanwhile my niece had grown up, and somewhere in the 1990s, started publishing her own comics. They were a lot more interesting to look at than my pages of nonstop ranting, but they also took far longer to produce. I'd gotten to where I could pick a topic, hook myself up to the computer, press an autopilot key, and spew out a few thousand irate words irate about it.

She had to do all her work by hand. Okay, I guess it's possible to draw comics on a computer—I wouldn't be surprised if many of those in the Sunday funny papers are created that way—but any serious artist has to sit there hour after hour, day after day, getting ink under her fingernails, whitening out the parts that don't look quite right, drawing and re-drawing a facial expression or a shadow-and-light arrangement until it looks something like she hoped it would, or perhaps like something totally different than she ever imagined but unexpectedly, even scarily beautiful.

I never had that kind of patience, let alone talent, so it should be understandable that I never developed the relationship with the printed page that she did. And when Aaron Cometbus hand-lettered nearly every page of every magazine he published for at least the first 20 years, I thought, well, that's very nice and all, but surely by now computer technology has advanced to the point where you could create a realistic Cometbus™ font instead of having to do all that tedious scribbling.

So when computers advanced to the point where you no longer had to use paper at all, when everything that was ever written or painted or photographed could be reduced to digital code and immortalized in cyberspace, I was more than enthusiastic. No more fighting a losing battle with shelves and boxes of old fanzines and books that threatened to overrun my limited living space. The whole universe of art and letters could be neatly enclosed in my 12" laptop.

Where's the romance in that, you say? Who's looking for romance? I'm just trying to clear out enough space in my room so I can walk around it again. But while it's been years since I've personally attempted to commit anything to print (you'll note that I don't have a problem with e-mailing articles like this one to somebody else to print for me), my niece has turned out hundreds, maybe even thousands of pages of words and art that wouldn't have been possible—or at least wouldn't have a fraction of the quality they do—without the use of the same old fashioned paper, pen, ink and printing presses that have been kicking around for centuries now.

So maybe I was a little hasty in writing off—so to speak—the old analog means of communication, and maybe now I have a slightly better understanding of people who still go all gooey-eyed at the sight of a freshly printed fanzine or comic. And come to think of it, I've never read a book, not even a short one, on my computer, and don't look forward to doing it in the future, either.

To the trees of the world, I say sorry, some of you are still going to have to get chopped down for the greater good, at least until the hippies get their way and make everything out of hemp. To all you readers and even you only-looking-at-the-pictures types, maybe it's time to offer a quiet appreciation for the wonders—civilization itself perhaps being one of them—that the printed page and the homegrown publisher has made possible.

P.S. Those of you who are into comics probably already know about my niece, Gabrielle Bell. If you don't yet, you will.

The Boy Detective Fails (an excerpt)

by Joe Meno

In our town—our town of shadows, our town of mystery—it seems our buildings have, without reason, begun to disappear completely. Still full of their loyal inhabitants, the buildings and the people all disintegrate soundlessly. The air has been hard to breathe, full of regret and the glassy voices of the unsurprised dead. Our commuters have begun carrying photographs of their loved ones with them to work. On the bus, we look at each other, pictures of our sad wives and doubtful children huddled close to our chests, quietly imagining the silent elaborations of our own deaths. We are disappointed coming home that evening because the many photos betray our cowardice: we live in a town that is disappearing, and worse, like the buildings, our hope is gone and we are no longer surprised by anything.

Only look now: past the remaining silver skyscrapers, glinting high along the horizon; past the shadowy green river; look over the small city park dedicated to some founding father whose name has long been lost; past the statue of an armless man astride a bronze horse; beyond the small white houses and narrow grey streets to the end of a gruesome cul-de-sac, the lane hidden among the smokestacks of the town's remaining factories, and there we see the Shady Glens Facility for Mental Competence.

Look closer still and we will discover a small figure standing there on the sidewalk staring up sadly at the square-shaped building. It is the boy detective, now aged thirty, who has finally been released: hooray. For many reasons, he is still unhappy. He stands before the strangely modern building, Shady Glens Facility for Mental Competence, yellow suitcase in hand, and is very disappointed. The boy detective thinks: *Oh, dear.* The boy detective thinks: *I do not quite like the looks of this place.* He feels a sob coming on but fights it with his teeth. He looks up, pushing his black bifocals against his face, and blinks.

As noted, the facility is modern, very rectangular, white with dull brick and thick black bars that give the windows—certainly

the eyes of the place—a feeling that it is also clinically unhappy. But there is no mistake: the weak, grey numbers beside the glass security doors exactly match the sloppy handwritten numbers on the slip of white paper in Billy's trembling palm, reminding him of a conversation with Dr. Kolberg that went exactly like this:

—Are you ready to return to the outside world, Billy?

—No, definitely not, sir.

—Well, you can't stay here forever now, can you?

—Why not? I'm not bothering anybody, sir.

—Because it's not healthy. You're a very special young man, Billy. It's time you found that out on your own, out there. The world may not be as terrible as you think.

—I would like to stay here one more month, if I may, sir.

—One more month? Why?

—Summer will be over, sir. I can't go out there if it's going to be summertime.

—And why not?

—I wouldn't want to see any young girls playing. I would not want to see any flowers outside.

—Why?

—Because everything happy right now is going to die.

—But Billy . . .

—I would not like to be reminded of anything pretty.

—But Billy, anything might . . .

—I would not like to be reminded.

—OK, OK. We will see what we can do, Billy.

Doctor Kolberg did all he could so that Billy was finally released after the school year had begun and the flowers had already started wilting.

The boy detective looks up suddenly. A pale blond girl is shouting at him from her front lawn across the street. Beside her, a small young boy is silently frowning.

"Do you see my bunny's head over there?" the girl shouts.

It is none other than Effie Mumford,

age 11, an adolescent, female, and very awkward-looking. What you must know about Effie is that she has won the local, state, and national science fair for the past three years. Also, she is hopelessly in love with amateur rocketry. Additionally, she is an interminable social pariah, a long-suffering possessor of many, many unstoppable runny noses, a silent victim of reoccurring eye infections, and a future prize-winning neurobiologist. One last important fact about Effie Mumford: she does not like to be touched. Not by anyone, not ever.

As per her usual routine, Effie is dressed wildly inappropriately, in her white and purple winter jacket, which she wears year round, well into the hottest months of summer, white scarf around her neck, fur-lined hood pulled up, entirely covering her small head.

Beside her is her younger brother, Gus Mumford, age nine, a square-headed dark boy who is smarter than all of his teachers in the third grade, and yet who is known for being a bully. Only that morning, Gus raised his hand to answer a puzzling question about the assassination of Abraham Lincoln and noticed that his teacher, Miss Gale, rolled her eyes at him and called upon Missy Blackworth instead. Is it the boy's fault that his hands are so large and square-shaped? Is it his fault that he was born loving the sound of muted flesh against muted flesh? He does not want to be the third grade bully, and yet he is. He does not want to hit Lucy Willis in the ankle with a stone at recess, but for some reason, he does. The boy, Gus, stands silently gazing downward, as he does not ever speak to anyone, horrified by the bloody shambles so near his feet.

Billy looks at them both, squinting, pointing at himself questioningly.

"Are you shouting at me?" Billy asks. "Yes."

The boy detective pushes his black bifocals up his face.

The girl may be blond. There are a few strands of her hair waving over her forehead and she is wearing thick purple-

framed glasses. Billy can see one of her eyes has a white patch over it.

"Do you see my bunny's head over there?" the girl asks again.

The boy detective turns and looks around, then shakes his head.

No is what his head is saying, but it takes a few moments for his mouth to say it.

"No."

"Oh, OK. It's definitely missing then."

The boy detective thinks this: ?

Like a quiet explosion—with the introduction of this, a new puzzle, the nearly knowable answer to the strange question lying somewhere before him—Billy finds his feet are moving. His tiny black-and-white notebook is out of his pocket and already he is writing. He hurries across the street and stands beside the girl, staring down at where she is looking. There, exactly as the girl has claimed, is a small, fawn-colored rabbit—but headless—the animal's neck a disastrous flood of blood and tendons, its great wound decorated with silver specks of small buzzing flies, two pairs of small ballerina slippers still on its feet.

"What is the meaning of this?" Billy asks.

"Its head isn't on its body."

"Yes. Or so it would seem."

The boy detective is already investigating: measuring, tabulating, a black-and-white blueprint, a detailed diagram of the missing bunny head is already magically appearing at the end of his pencil. He introduces himself like this: "My name is Billy Argo. I am a detective."

"A detective?"

"Yes. What is your name?"

"Effie Mumford." With that, she wipes her runny nose. Beside her, Gus, her brother, only squints suspiciously.

"And what is his name?" Billy asks.

"Gus Mumford. But he doesn't speak."

"I see. And why not?"

"His teacher won't call on him in class. He writes notes, though."

The boy detective stares at the strange little dark-eyed boy, who passes him a small piece of white paper. It says: *Hello stranger.*

The boy detective nods at the note then asks: "When did you see this bunny last?"

"I don't know. Last night. Before I went to sleep," Effie replies.

"Is this a random occurrence or has anything like this ever happened to you before?"

"Nope. No way. It's a total surprise. It's very surprising to me."

"As it should be."

"It's pretty gross."

"Yes. Very gross, indeed." The boy detective makes a note of this in his notepad: *Very gross.*

The girl says: "I don't think its head is up here. We've looked around the front of the house pretty good."

Gus Mumford hands the detective another note: *Will you help us look?*

Billy nods, staring at the strange boy again.

The three of them walk around the side of the brick building, searching in the dark green bushes, beneath the sturdy white porch, in the small grey alley. "Mr. Buttons!" the girl calls, slapping her leg.

"It is very unlikely that it will come when called now."

The boy detective and the girl stare at each other for a moment. They look behind two silver garbage cans, but to no avail. All they uncover is a sprung mouse-trap and a withered corsage.

In a moment, Mrs. Mumford comes to the door. She has short dark hair, blue eyes, and looks quite lovely in a navy dress with ruffles. She stares at the strange man on her front lawn. "May I help you?" she asks.

"I'm a detective. I'm here to find out what happened to the bunny."

"Effie, I told you to please put Mr. Buttons in the trash."

"We are figuring out what happened to him, Mom," Effie argues.

"Well, don't make a mess. We're eating in a half hour."

"OK."

"That goes for you, too, Gus, dear."

Gus Mumford nods, hating to be reminded of anything he already knows. He

holds up a note: *Fine!*

"And no playing with chemicals, you two. I don't want you playing around with chemicals again." With that, Mrs. Mumford disappears, going back to her cleaning.

The boy detective and the Mumford children stare down at the bunny's headless body once more.

"Now then, I will ask you this important question, Effie and Gus Mumford: Do you know anyone who would want to do this?"

"Yes. Everybody, practically, of course."

"Why?"

"Because they're hateful. I get first place in everything at school and people hate me for it."

"Who hates you for it?"

"Hateful people. The girls especially."

"They hate you for winning at school?"

"Yes."

"I see." The boy detective makes another note. "What grade are you in?"

"I was double-promoted. I am in the eighth grade."

"The eighth grade? How old are you?"

"Eleven."

"Oh, I see."

The boy detective and the two Mumford children stand staring down at the small brown body.

"So," the girl says.

"Yes?"

"So, are you going to find its head or not?" the girl asks.

"No. It does not look like it."

"No?" the girl asks.

"No. I don't think it's very likely."

"You're not a very good detective, are you?"

"No. I am afraid I am not."

They stare down at the rabbit's body then, in awkward silence, no one quite sure what should be said next. ©

Joe Meno's *The Boy Detective Fails* is available now from Punk Planet Books.

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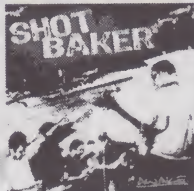
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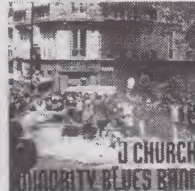
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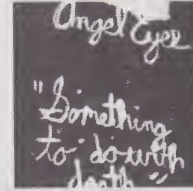
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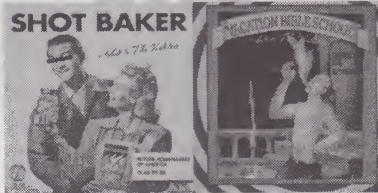
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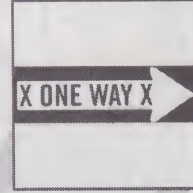
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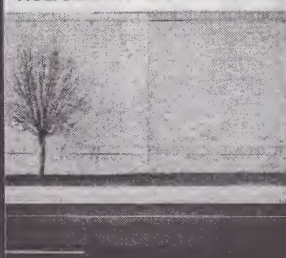


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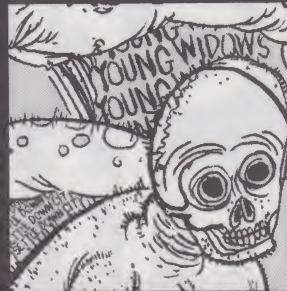
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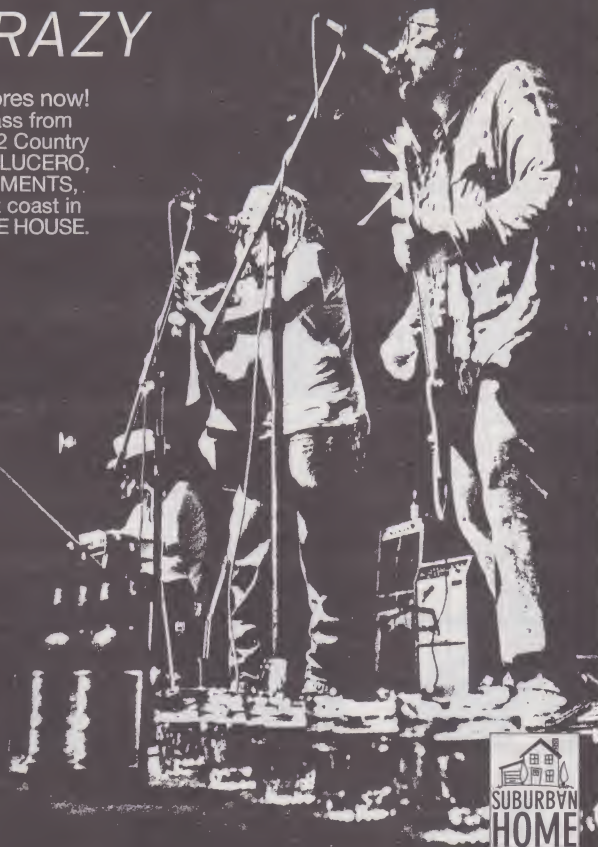
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HOW TO THROW A DIY ART SHOW AND STILL MAKE A BUCK

By Molly Crabapple

Like many artists, you may be tired of waiting for a gallery to sweep you off your feet. You've mailed slides, written artist your statement, and you've received only discouraging silence in return. But why wait for a gallery to notice you when there's wall space in the local cafe or club, practically begging to be filled? So, with courage and a portfolio, you approach the proprietor. And, unlike at those galleries, the proprietor is overjoyed. Of course you can have a show! You go home, head buzzing with visions of selling your artwork and telling that gallery to go jump in a lake. Yet for all their promise, shows in non-traditional venues often end in failure because of bad publicity, bad communication, and lack of confidence. So using two examples from my own life, I'm going to give you a roadmap for making sure your DIY art exhibition ends in sweet victory.

EXAMPLE ONE (Pathetic)

Having just moved to a new town, I decided to have an art show in a local bar. I showed my work to the owner, who loved it and suggested I have an opening. I went home, drew like a jacked-up monkey, and came back to hang on the appointed date. But when I showed up with crates of framed pictures, the owner was nowhere to be found. The bartender knew nothing about my show. Reluctantly he agreed to let my hang my work in the back. As for my poster in the window, he tore it down as soon as I looked away. Undiscouraged, I posted fliers every shop in my neighborhood, and put on my skimpiest dress for the opening. No one came. So how do you avoid sitting alone at your own opening, crying into your overpriced drink? Well, let's look at what I did wrong.

1. I showed in a bar. Bars are dead wrong for showing art. They're dark, noisy, cramped, full of drunks, and have a lethal drawback: no interest in selling your work.
2. Bad communication. In retail establishments, it's very important that not only the owners know about your show, but all the employees. Get a cell number in case you show up with two duffel bags full of paintings and the barista doesn't know who you are.
3. My fliers weren't specific enough, and I didn't make enough of them. I only made 100 fliers, not realizing most fliers just get thrown out. Also, the time range I noted was too broad (I wrote Tuesday evening, not Tuesday 6-8 p.m.).
4. Most fatally, I didn't believe in myself. I was embarrassed that I didn't have a show in a real gallery, so I didn't tell my friends, try for press, or stand up to that obnoxious bartender. Tacky as it sounds, confidence is the most crucial part of success. Remember, your art is important—in or out of a gallery.

EXAMPLE TWO (Triumph!)

For my second show, I had a plan. Six months before my planned exhibition date, I trundled up to a local comic-book store that

hangs affordable art on its walls. I said to the owner, "I want an art show. But I don't want anything half-baked about it. I want free alcohol and a go-go girl in the window. I want reviews. I want press releases sent. And I want hundreds of people to show up." Startled at my vehemence, the owner agreed. So for the next six months, I worked my ass off. I hired a sultry burlesque babe to dance in the window. I wrote to a local liquor company, who gave me 400 bottles of hard cider for the opening. I pestered over 100 magazines, and snagged a review in one. And on one freezing February night, 250 people came to my opening. Over half the work sold. How did I do it, you ask? Let me tell you.

1. I had a concept. This wasn't going to be just any art show. This was going to be my last show of pen and inks. Everyone involved wore black-and-white vintage clothes. Even the food was black and white. The go-go girl in the window dressed like the Victorian tarts I like to paint. Whether you do silk-screened gig posters or photocopies of your genitals, a strong theme will pique peoples' interest in your show.
2. I sent out listings to every event calendar in my city. Notice all the free rags that clutter your local coffee shop? They should be listing your work! Ditto for websites. A month before your show, send out listings to them. Listings should include time, place, date, contact info, and two or three sentences explaining the show's painfully unique concept.
3. I made 1000 fliers. Make yourself some glossy fliers for your art opening. Google "flyers" and hunt around for the best deal. Make sure your fliers tie in with your concept. If you aren't a designer, hire someone to help you. Lay those babies around—especially in well off neighborhoods or cool venues, wherever an art patron would be likely to find them.
4. This undercut my independence a bit, but I got a liquor company to sponsor me. Sponsorship is easier than you think. What companies around you need cheap advertising? Whether you're talking to a big company or the girl who knits dildo cozies, businesses can be persuaded to give you free stuff. It's cheap advertising for them, and gives you free booze, food, or booty for your opening.
5. Tell everyone. Even people you barely know. I know that you feel like a sorry misfit doing it, but so does everyone else who ever got a rock thrown at them in high school. You'll be amazed at how many acquaintances you have.

Finally, it is most important to believe in—and promote—yourself. Galleries, like organized religion and efficiency consultants, thrive on mystery. They want you to believe that they possess uber-important magic you'll have to soul your soul to get. So, noble art-star, rip down the curtain. Realize that galleries are salespeople—some good, some bad, but not morally superior to you. If you can sell your work better, do it. ©

DIY food

EVERYTHING THAT EATS, LIVES

by stacey gengo

Edible print

If you're anything like me, clipping recipes from waiting room magazines and newspapers is one way to experience the volumes of cookbooks that are released every year. Who can really afford to keep up with buying all those books? I've been collecting recipes from various sources for years. Stacks of clippings are stacked inside blank books piled on shelves. They await some form of organization that I can easily reference; as opposed to sorting through stacks of papers to find that one tart recipe I remember clipping years ago.

This is a very personal take on the cookbook, a bit of a maverick form. It reflects a cook's origins, tastes, and general skill level. Often these collections have notes, critiques, drawings and revisions that reflect the mind of the cook. They even include information outside of cooking. Books like these reflect a history of cooking in the printed form.

Cookbooks have been compiled as long as we have been a literate world. The earliest traces of culinary recordings hail from Europe. Here, the purpose of writing a treatise on food served more of a medicinal purpose. Early Romans wrote of cooking as a method of creating sound habits to preserve good health. Perhaps a precursor to the modern trend of diet books, every writer had a differing opinion on proper health habits. Some relied on religion to coax the body and mind into observing a less than gluttonous lifestyle. Others chose to invoke Greek science where the four elements (air, fire, water, and earth) were reflected in a person's constitution—certainly derived from Asian philosophies of the body.

This tradition of food as medicine followed a trajectory well into the 19th century and can be found in early American cookery books. While most books were marketed toward middle-class women, maverick manuscripts were circulating on the fringes. For women living on the frontier kitchen wisdom served as a record of medical knowledge of the time—where living on the edge of society was a considerable distance from news of medical breakthroughs. This included various information clipped from newspapers, as well as handwritten notes on home-tested cures.

One of the most popular early American cookbooks, or "receipt books" as they were called, was Miss Eliza Leslie's *Directions for Cookery*, first published in 1837. Way back then, Miss Leslie was commenting on the importance of quality ingredients and an honesty in the kitchen that we find today in the direction of 'whole food,' or seasonal cooking. Yet even a formal publication like this included sections devoted to "Preparations for the Sick" and "Perfumery," still professing kitchen wisdom.

The closest we come these days to this type of cookery book is the personally compiled cookbook to aid fundraising efforts. First emerging during the Civil War to support families of soldiers, these books are still popular today. Published locally or regionally, these documents of amateur cooks rival the professional

cookbook titles in that these recipes are actually tested, tasted, and proven. They also include some home remedies like the early manuscripts.

So if you're not clipping recipes, purchase a collection from a group that has. When you do, your money is well spent supporting a local organization while maybe inspiring you to make your own recipe book. ©

Miss Eliza Leslie's method for stopping blood

For slight bleeding, "nothing will more effectually stop the bleeding than old cobwebs compressed into a lump and applied to the wound, or bound on it with a rag. A scrap of cotton wadding is also good for stopping blood."

The following are adapted from a local food service organization cookbook, "A Matter of Taste:"

Play Dough

Bring 2 cups of water to a boil with a desired amount of food coloring added.

In a large bowl mix 2-1/2 cups of flour, 1/2 cup of salt, 1 tablespoon of alum—a pickling spice and 3 tablespoons of vegetable oil. Add colored water.

Cool slightly and knead until smooth.

Keep in an airtight container.

Robert Redford Cake

Nearly every compiled cookbook has a version, named such to taste better than Robert Redford looks—a variation on Better Than Sex Cake. This definitely dates itself. The matron of desserts, Maida Heatter published a version in her book, *Cakes*, but it's essentially a flourless chocolate cake topped with ganache. Here is the more common version found in the compiled books.

Melt 1/2 stick of unsalted butter. Mix in 1 cup of chopped pecans, 1 cup of flour and a pinch of salt. Mix until crumbly. Press this mixture into a 9x13-inch baking dish. Bake in a 350-degree oven for 15 minutes, or until golden. Allow to cool completely.

Mix 1 (8-ounce) package of softened cream cheese with 1 cup of powdered sugar and 1/2 of a 12-ounce container of whipped cream. Spread onto crust.

Mix 1 box of instant vanilla pudding, 1 box of instant chocolate pudding and 3 cups of whole milk. Beat until fluffy. Spread on the first layer.

Top with remaining whipped cream.

Chop 1 (3-1/2 ounce) bar of your favorite chocolate and sprinkle on top.

Cover and refrigerate overnight.

DIY SEX EARLY TO BED

by sex lady searah

Dear Sex Lady,

I have been involved with a guy who finds Trojan Magnum condoms much too tight . . . not that i don't believe him (it really is difficult to get off and appears to be pretty uncomfortable for him) but it was my understanding that condoms generally were able to stretch and accommodate for considerable size. Is there a different condom that might be better to try?

Thanks for your time.
Jamie

As boys come in all different sizes, so do condoms. Of course, all condoms are designed to stretch so that you get a nice snug fit around your wanker, but some are too tight for many men out there and that can be downright uncomfortable. Like a lot of things in the world, sometimes you just have to experiment with different brands until you find the one that fits best (and then don't forget which one that is!)

From what I can gather (you would not believe how hard it is to find accurate info on condom measurements), the Trojan Magnum XL is the largest condom that is readily available. It is a smidge larger than the Trojan Magnum. The other larger-sized condoms to try are Durex Max Love, Lifestyles XL & Kimono Maxx. These are all larger from top to bottom as well as width-wise but a lot of condoms nowadays are made with a wider top (Pleasure Plus, One Roomier, Durex Enhanced Pleasure, among others). These can actually increase the sensations that boy feels because the extra room at the top maximizes the friction against their willie while stickin' it in & out and some men who need just a bit of extra room report that these are more comfortable than "regular" condoms.

That said, your guy has tried all the larger condoms out there and still can't find one to fit his massive wad, Condomania.com actually has custom fitted condoms that come in 55 different sizes. You just download their Fit Kit, measure up your shaft and order a condom fit especially for your unique and wonderful peter.

While the condom industry is pretty good right now at making condoms to fit all kinds of guys (and yes, they do make "Snugger Fit" condoms for smaller guys) they do still suck at making condoms for latex-sensitive people. If you have ever used a condom (or had a condom used inside of you) and have had a sort of burny-itchy-redness thing happen, it is possible you are sensitive to latex (which more and more people seem to be) and if you are,

then 99 percent of the condoms on the market are going to make you itchy and uncomfortable. There are two non-latex conventional condoms on the market: Avanti and Trojan Supra* (I'm not mentioning Lambskin condoms because besides being kinda icky, they don't really protect well against anything so skip 'em). Both are much more expensive than regular condoms (\$2-\$3 each) and only come in one "regular" size**, so if you are latex sensitive and well-endowed too bad! This industry makes probably billions of condoms each year in TONS of different shapes, sizes and styles, yet there has not been a new or improved non-latex condom on the market in years! The only real solution for huge guys who need to use non-latex condoms are Female Condoms (which can also be used in boy/boy situations as well . . . just remove the inner ring). These are made out of Polyurethane and are actually worn inside a woman with a ring sticking out of her vagina to keep the condom in place. Not the prettiest thing in the world, but a great alternative when you need it. Female condoms are also ideal for any guy who complains that condoms are too tight or hard to get on. Because the condom is in the woman and loose, it doesn't hurt the guy at all. These are also a smart choice for women who want to take control of disease and pregnancy protection themselves. Of course like the other non-latex condoms, the Female Condom is more pricey (about \$3 each), but then isn't a good fuck worth a little more?

Just remember that condoms are one of the easiest and best ways to protect yourself from getting knocked up or contracting something nasty and it is worth investing some time and money into finding out which condom works best for you and your partner. Happy safer fucking!

Notes

*Trojan Surpa is one of the few condoms still on the market that contains Nonoxynol-9, which new evidence suggests can actually increase your risk of contracting STDs. Nonoxynol-9 creates tiny abrasions in the vagina or butt, so I normally recommend staying away from it!

** Polyurethane condoms are not a stretchy as latex condoms, so be sure to use plenty of lube and start slowly. Also, these kind of condoms do not breakdown with oils like latex condoms, so you can use oil-based lubes with them, although I never recommend putting oil-based lube in a vagina ☺

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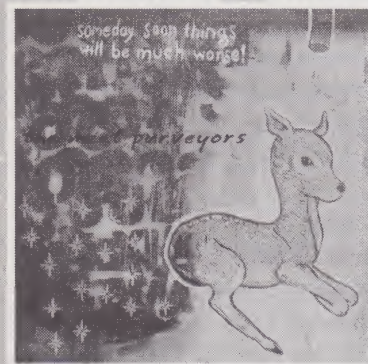
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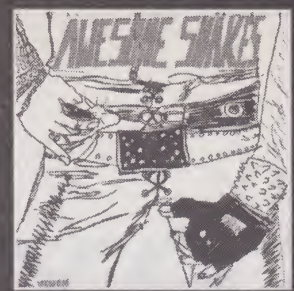
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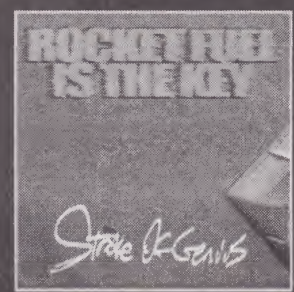
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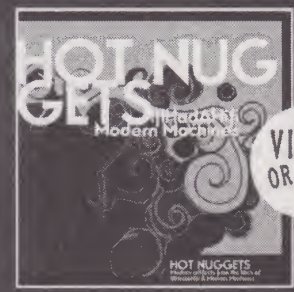
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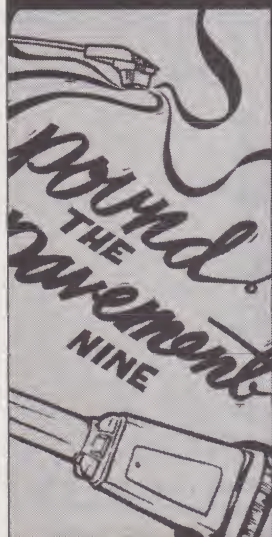
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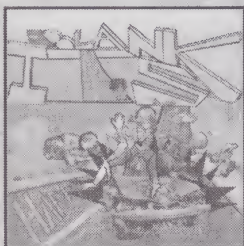
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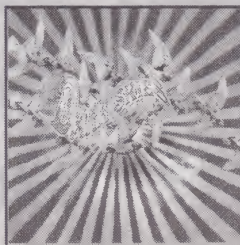
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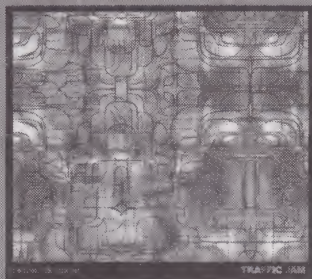
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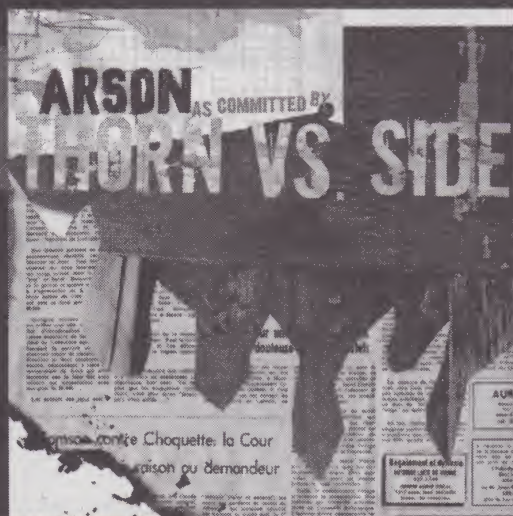
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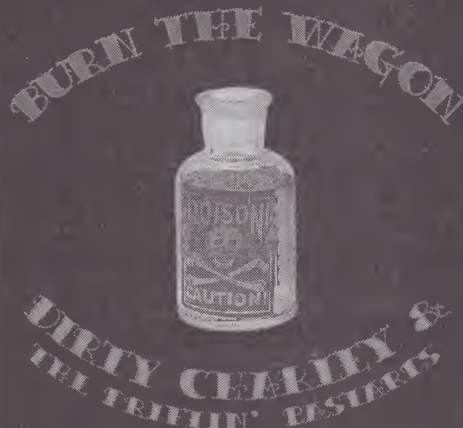
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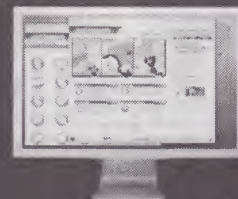
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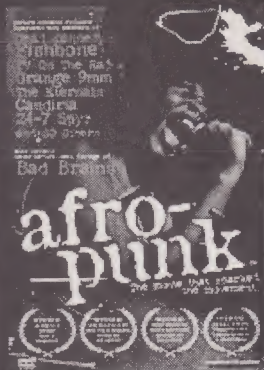


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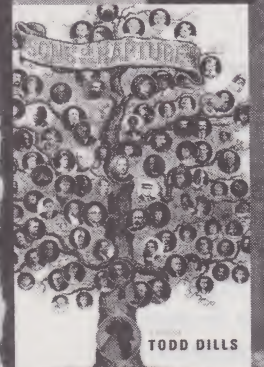
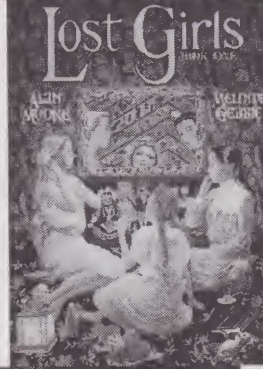
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MUSIC



Coup, the – *Pick a Bigger Weapon*, CD

When it comes to lyrics, hip-hop has been rather booty-centric lately. Big booties, shaking booties, booties dropped down to the floor and pointed up at the sky. Top-40 songs praise not only the booties, but also the rappers for having the good taste to appreciate them. These songs suggest it's an accomplishment, loving all that well-fed flesh, so much more abundant than on the skinny model-types held up as the norm of white-girl beauty.

The Coup has a booty song on their new album *Pick a Bigger Weapon*. Lyricist Boots Riley praises a young woman first for her political consciousness and secondly for her ample butt, nicknaming her "waddle waddle." Riley goes on to note, "Coulda' called you 'talky talky' or nothing at all / I was crushed when I got the call." The phone call is when Riley learns of the woman's death—liposuction complications. The song manages to both celebrate curvy women and to critique that very objectification. With a string section, no less.

If you are reading this magazine then chances are you already agree with most of the Coup's lyrical messages—the war is a fiasco, Bush is a dangerous idiot, workers should earn higher wages, the aforementioned objectification of women sucks, etc. But this record isn't only interested in rehashing talking points to true believers, this record is out to win some recruits. Boots Riley is open about being a Communist; however, he's not pushing the party but rather a party. A greasy, smoky, boozy, funny, funky party.

A definite dance track is "ShoYoAss," where Riley stacks up the rhymes while the backing musicians, veterans of early '80s funk and R&B session work, play the hooks. Although Pam the Funkstress does turntable duties on this record as she has on previous releases, the samples here are garnish, not the main course. Later, the song references Prince's "Sexuality," modifying the lyrics to demand, "It's introduction of a new breed of leaders / Stand up, organize."

Jump ahead to "I Love Boosters!" the perfect summer jam if summer jams celebrated organized shoplifting rings, and then jump back to "I JUST WANNALAYAROUND ALL DAY IN BED WITH YOU," a song that manages to combine the pleasures of early morning sex with commentary on the sorry state of relations between management and workers.

Or, jump over to "Captain Sterling's Little Problem" with its ferocious guitar solo from Audioslave's Tom Morello. The lyrics describe a mutiny of overseas soldiers, asking, "Excuse me colonel sir, may I request please / Permission to go home or blow off your knees." Like all of the Coup's lyrics, this track not only identifies a problem but also proposes a solution—not a compromise, not a way to cope, but a *solution*.

Of course, you can jump around from track to track, but this collection of songs is that second rarest of hip-hop creatures—an actual album that is meant to be enjoyed from start to finish. Songs build thematically on one another; there is variety of topics and tempos.

This attention to the album-as-a-whole means that the most-rare hip-hop creature—the entertaining skit—is here as well. Jello Biafra makes a cameo in the skit "Two Enthusiastic Thumbs Down," playing the narrator of a retail training film, which leads to the shoplifting an-

them that segues into booty remorse song, etc. The whole is greater than the sum of the parts, but they are some fucking awesome parts

A pair of tracks are lyrically righteous but musically sub-par. "HEAD of State" details the insider deals between Saddam Hussein and the Bush family as a schoolyard taunt—worth a single listen but no repeats. And "Ass-Breath Killers," describing the ailment affecting those who kiss too much ass, has the meandering, shapeless quality of the worst Parliament-Funkadelic songs.

But these are tiny slivers of a big, funky pie. It's been five years since the Coup's last disc, and Boots Riley and Pam the Funkstress have used their time wisely. Longtime fans will find just what they want from *Pick a Bigger Weapon*—fresh sounds that re-create old feelings while discussing new ideas. New listeners may regret that they took so long to make it to the party. But the fun is just getting started, grab a plate, don't be shy. —Andrew Reynolds
Epitaph, 2798 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90026, epitaph.com



Matmos – *The Rose Has Teeth in the Mouth of the Beast*, CD

After birthdays and holidays, many groaning children are made to write thank-you letters to those who fattened their wallets and/or piggy banks. With *The Rose Has Teeth in the Mouth of the Beast*, Drew Daniel and MC Schmidt of Matmos have attacked a similar project with grateful gusto. The album's 10 tracks serve both as aural biographies for and sonic tributes to individuals whom the duo

admires and by whom it's been inspired. With this subject matter, Matmos has created their most accomplished work—an album that suitably balances concept and aesthetics.

Of course, Matmos are no strangers to concept records. 2001's *A Chance to Cut is a Chance to Cure* crafted IDM-styled dance tunes from samples of surgeries. On the 2003 album, *The Civil War*, the duo worked with more "traditional" musical instruments to construct their sprawling and beautiful interpretation of 19th century music. Both albums exhibited a profound knowledge of composition, as well as a keen sense for interesting sources. But at times the records sacrificed listenability for concept or vice versa—rarely to the point of serious detriment, but the balancing act was still up in the air. After producing portions of Bjork's last two albums and accompanying her on tours, the group seems to have things better sorted out.

The Rose Has Teeth opens with a passage by philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, with various vocalists repeating the titular line over a dancehall shuffle of roses smacking tables, farmers shoveling cow shit, and wisdom teeth clicking. That might sound daunting, but it's surprisingly easy to sink into the laid-back rhythm and mumble along with the chorus. Other tunes use samples of anonymous sex ("Public Sex for Boyd McDonald"), physically manipulated cow reproductive organs ("Tract for Valerie Solanas"), snails on the move ("Snails and Lasers for Patricia Highsmith"), and the clattering of various typewriters and tape recorders ("Rag for William S. Burroughs"). The human components of Matmos are also under the mic and enduring manipulation. Daniel is recorded masturbating to a James Bidgood porno for the drippy jazz

About our reviews: We make every attempt to review all the records we receive (CD's, CD-R's, and vinyl only—as long as they're not released on a major label or one of its subsidiaries), but we reserve the right to not review something if we feel it isn't appropriate for Punk Planet. Also, due to the insane volume of mail we receive, some releases fall through the cracks. We're bi-monthly, so it can take up to five months for something to appear in the magazine, so send stuff early, and send it with as much contact information as possible. CD-R's that aren't promotional copies from labels or from CD-R only labels end up in the demo section, and reissues have their own section as well. Records marked with a picture of the album cover have been deemed noteworthy by that specific reviewer, for better or worse, and reviews under 100 words exclusively appear online at www.punkplanet.com. Please keep in mind that when sending your review, it might get trashed. The review is only that reviewer's opinion and doesn't necessarily reflect the opinion of the entire magazine. Personally, I love Decapitated, but I think I'm in the minority over here. See what I'm saying? Any questions, concerns, or accolades can be directed to Dave Hofer at reviews@punkplanet.com. Please DO NOT call the office, as Dave is not there full-time. Thank you. Send your stuff to: Punk Planet, 4229 North Honor, Chicago, IL 60613.

This issue's review team: Eric Action (EA), Dan Agacki (DA), Abbie Amadio (AJA), Bill Angelbeck (BA), Anthony Bartkewicz (AB), Andrea Bussell (AMB), Mairead Case (MC), Vincent Chung (VC), Art Ettinger (AE), Mor Fleisher (MF), Kristen Grayewski (KG), Eric Grubbs (EG), Ari Joffe (AJ), Steve Kane (SK), Chay Lawrence (CL), Ryan Leach (RL), Justin Marciniak (JM), Steve Mizek (SRM), Sarah Moody (SBM), Scott J. Morrow (SJM), (Mr.) Dana Morse (DM), Brian Moss (BM), Bart Niedzialkowski (BN), Missy Paul (MP), Rex Reason (RR), Matthew Siblo (MS), Justin Vellucci (JV), Mike Vinikour (MXV). **Edited by Dave Hofer (DH)**

tune "Semen Song for James Bidgood" and being burned with a cigarette by Germs member Don Bolles ("Germs Burn for Darby Crash"). Schmidt gets off easy by comparison, merely having to shave his head for the same song.

What's most impressive about this album is not just its source material or its subjects, but the impressive way the duo assembles all of the above. Avant-garde or musique concrete pieces can easily go wrong and bore listeners, regardless of the conceptual ecstasy. Matmos's musical foresight and painstaking editing make *The Rose Has Teeth* a compelling listen from front to back. "Germs Burn for Darby Crash" is a blistering IDM track, punctuated by stuttering samples of Daniel's pained yelp. The album's ass-shaker, "Steam and Sequins for Larry Levan," is a wonky disco number Levan himself would be proud to spin. Matmos flex their straight-up musical muscles—again with more "traditional" instruments and players—all over the record. "Semen Song for James Bidgood" layers eerie string arrangements with Antony's (of Johnsons fame) tearful pipes. The perky and jerky "Solo Buttons for Joe Meek" emulates Meek's surface-of-the-moon surf rock with the Kronos Quartet swinging along in the orchestra pit. *The Rose Has Teeth* manages to cram naughty funk ("Public Sex . . ."), smoky jazz ("Snails and Lasers . . ."), San Francisco booty bass ("Tract . . .") and delusional ragtime ("Rag . . .") without ever showing signs of fatigue. And the only track that might strain listeners' attention is the Burroughs tribute, which stretches upwards of 14 minutes.

With *The Rose Has Teeth in the Mouth of the Beast*, the members of Matmos have proven themselves wise craftsmen capable of turning the ambiguous concept of musical portraits into fully realized works of musical art. While their past efforts have also been excellent in a similar regard, the duo's latest work pours out the perfect blend of provocative melodies, rhythms, samples, and concept. It's highly recommended to spend time on Matmos's website, wherein the group lays out how the album came together and more about the people who inspired such stunning work. Although those honored might not be able to enjoy this aural "thank you" themselves (as all but one are dead), fans new and old will likely feel compelled to whip out the good stationary after this record. —Steve Mizek

Hatador, 625 Broadway, 12th floor, New York, NY 10012, matadorrecords.com



Thoughts of Ionesco – The Scar is Our Watermark, CD/DVD

Influences. The heart of the worst interview question; the one-sheet space filler; the worst way to identify a band. Can't come up with something original? Chalk up your band's replica sound to your supposed "influences." For the most part, when bands talk about their influence, it's a more direct relationship. Own a Merzbow CD? Throw a noisy part into a song. Pick up a reissue of an old Flaming Lips

album? Use some guitar pedals. For Detroit's now-defunct Thoughts of Ionesco, their influences aren't as easy to identify. This CD and DVD combination, a release that came as a pleasant surprise, helps recognize where this powerhouse came from and subsequently went to.

Brought together in 1996, the band didn't release a ton of material or gain any sort of national recognition. Rather, they made their mark and moved on. Their music was unintentionally brought to my attention when I caught them by happenstance at Chicago's famed Fireside Bowl. The volume alone was intimidating, but the intensity emanating from the three men onstage was just frightening. Even at the age of 17, I knew that this was the sort of dangerous activity that was OK to be around. Though I've been accused of not knowing enough of my musical roots, I deeply believe in the preservation and reissuing of music as well as the history that comes along with it. Though not a terribly popular band, I connected with *Thoughts of Ionesco*, and appreciate this collection.

Both the liner notes and the film describe the bands' influences in detail, and after hearing their list, it becomes painfully obvious that influences don't necessarily have to make themselves visible in the music itself, but rather in one's lifestyle and attitude. *Thoughts of Ionesco* lived the drugged-out, destructive side of Miles Davis and John Coltrane, worshipped the low-end of the Swans, and had the aggression and "fuck off" attitude of Black Flag. Guitarist, vocalist, and lyricist Sean H goes on to list such people as Albert Ayler, King Crimson, and Integrity as other influences in the liner notes, and when listening to *The Scar is Our Watermark*, you don't hear them so much as you feel them.

The film that comes with the CD sheds light on the darker side of *Thoughts of Ionesco*. There's a loose band history in there somewhere, but the narrative focuses on the mental instability of these three guys. Recent interview footage suggests that they've calmed down significantly since their late-teens and early 20s, but the numerous stories told by both the members and their friends imply that their drug and alcohol consumption, coupled with whatever was going on in their brains, caused a lot of violence at shows as well as within their music. The copious amounts of live footage reinforces this, but shows a band hungry to achieve something different, intense, and free of genre. Back over on the CD, the samples of their recorded output illustrate that *Thoughts of Ionesco* were just as intense in the studio as they were onstage (minus the instrument smashing), a feat attempted by thousands and failed by almost as much.

Although the DVD does a great job of explaining just how crazy *Thoughts of Ionesco* were in their heyday, the actual history of the band is lost amid a swarm of "I remember this one time . . ." anecdotes. More recently, the band added a live saxophonist, which is noted, but the band's attempts to alienate themselves from the hardcore scene isn't explored. The liner notes provided by Sean H are mainly just a re-hashing of what was covered in the DVD. More photos or a detailed discography would have been nice, instead.

Pettiness aside, *The Scar is Our Watermark* is an excellent time capsule by a band not often talked about from a scene and time period even-less spoken of. Kudos to Seventh Rule for providing the history lesson. —Dave Hofer

Seventh Rule, 2303 W. Montrose, Floor One, Chicago, IL 60618, www.seventhrule.com

Toys That Kill – Shanked!, LP

In the late '80s, FYP started out playing fast, juvenile hardcore, gradually morphing into playing fast, sloppy pop. The band's benchmark release, 1993's *Dance My Dunce*, was a breath of fresh air. With spastic classics like "Vacation Bible School," "2000 AD," and "Fuck You and a Half," FYP brought a juvenile sense of kiddy power into their sound. Singing about important

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHTS



Reviewer Spotlight: Eric Action (EA)

Sonics, the, Here are the Sonics. Completely essential to any record collection is the classic garage stomp fest *Here are the Sonics*. It is surprising how many music freaks don't own this classic debut platter. Norton records released a great version of this LP with four extra tracks a few years back, so you won't have to look far in finding this.

Three of those are mucho needed Christmas tracks from the Etiquette Christmas compilation. This disc has so many killer tracks: "Have Love Will Travel," "The Witch," "Psycho," and more. Covered by every garage band in the last 20 years, the Sonics, in many ways, marked the birth of punk rock 'n' roll. Gerry Roslie's lead vocals are perfect; she's a poster child for how '60s garage rock should sound. Songs about girls and cars is the driving theme behind the Sonics and perfectly encapsulate the era. At the time, a band like the Sonics would piss off your parents—so loud, so obnoxious, you can almost hear Mom and Dad saying, "That isn't singing." Now parents are listening to the Sonics with their kids, and the band's classic version of "Have Love, Will Travel" is selling \$30,000 automobiles. You can find many different packages of their songs out there, and *Here Are the Sonics* is an excellent place to start. From the classic band shot on the cover to the incredible pounding rhythm of the Sonics, you must own this masterpiece.

Currently spinning: X of the LA variety, their entire output; Sonic Youth, *Rather Ripped*; reading *Kill Your Idols*.



Reviewer Spotlight: Dan Agacki (DA)

Born Against, Nine Patriotic Hymns for Children. As a teenager, I became a very big fan of Econochrist. To this day, every time I've asked someone if he or she were an Econochrist fan, I have received the answer, "Dude, Born Against were way better." For years, this led to me giving Born Against a black mark. Now that I'm older and wiser, I've come to my senses and realized that Born Against are amazing. Better than Econochrist? Probably. Born Against had the total package. All their records looked and sounded amazing. They stuck out from the pack. The biting wit that their songs contained was good for stirring up trouble. But they weren't afraid to speak their minds and that's admirable. Through Born Against and Dear Jesus fanzine, Sam McPheeters and Adam Nathanson proved to be wizards with the pen. Musically, *Nine Patriotic Hymns* doesn't neatly fit into the early '90s. I could see them fitting in loosely with the early Gravity Records bands, but Born Against was more straight up and diverse than them. As with most classic records, *Nine Patriotic Hymns* is a hard to classify masterpiece. You can call it hardcore, but that's only a hint at the genius that lies within.

Buy Or Die: Knockdown, *Discography*; the Consumers, *All My Friends are Dead*; Electric Eels, *The Eyeball of Hell*; Frank Zappa, *Cucamonga*; Beg for More, demo and live.



Reviewer Spotlight: Abbie Amadio (AJA)

Cursive, Burst and Bloom. In my old age, I can't take as much Cursive as I used to, which is why this EP is the perfect combination and compromise of sound and output. It's funny what only five years will change, but sometimes a short amount of time can be an eternity. *Burst and Bloom* begins where *Domestica* left off, continuing the saga of broken relationships and lamenting the incestuous-ness of the indie rock scene. Somewhere, there is a parallel being drawn. For me, the songs are memorable: filled with angst, giddily self-referencing, and twistingly arranged. As well, Tim Kasher's aim at creating a cohesive theme, turning the same ideas and problems over and over, is admirable. It almost makes it seem that he's spending nights pacing back and forth in a dark room, filling notebook pages with the same sentences and never reaching a conclusion. Sure. As is Kasher's signature, his vocals are torn, writhing, and from the gut. The *Burst and Bloom* EP is just the right amount of Cursive's heartbroken, philosophical grief, delivered with Kasher's signature howl. To me, some of their most memorable songs are on this EP, and the album provides a good jolt rather than a kick to the head.

Five CDs staring me in the face: Beekeeper, *S/T*; Unwound, *The Future of What*; Jejuné, *This Afternoon Malady*; Spiritualized, *Amazing Grace*; Slim Moon, *Won't You Dance With This Man?*



Reviewer Spotlight: Bill Angelbeck (BA)

Flying Saucer Attack, New Lands. Flying Saucer Attack hit us with dense, washes of sound. Since Loveless, My Bloody Valentine (MBV) set in its wake a vast range of imitators who thought they could mimic the sound with a mass layering of tracks. They usually just dulled their own sound in a mishmash where tracks become inchoate. With

New Lands, I finally heard someone accomplish that density in unity with the depth of a massive soundscape. Unlike MBV, the layering isn't as multi-tracked; it's much more minimalist and stripped primarily to guitars and feedback, where loops are more apt to serve as drum tracks. David Pearce's voice is calm and ethereal, fitting the music like the wash of another instrument in the mix. "Past," the album opener, begins with a soft amount of white noise interrupted by a siren of guitar and feedback. Before long, almost difficult to hear beneath the wail of guitars, come the clocking beats of drums. On "Up in Her Eyes," an industrial loop churns mechanically before the guitar blazes in immediately with its own echoes. With his songs, the guitar is multifaceted and dominates the sound field like a spotlight. Much like Earth or SunnO))) pulsate in low bass

All Systems Go - Mon Chi Chi, CD

All Systems Go, Mon Chi Chi's second album in three years, begins with a rebel yell matched only by your middle school glory days spent head-banging in front of a mirror. Also, like middle school, most songs have a high moment: the glimmering keys of "Fascination Unknown," co-penned by Afghan Whigs' Greg Dulli; or "Megan's Laws" gentle roll, complemented by breathy harmonies from Hole's Melissa Auf Der Mar. Unfortunately, the best songs are those with guest stars. The rest of the album is largely recycled (if earnestly so) from monster rock and Iggy Pop. This doesn't mean that middle schoolers won't love it (they will, especially the swelling thunder-choruses), but the rest of us are waiting for high school. (MC) *Bad Taste, Box 1243, S-221 05 Lund, Sweden, badtasterecords.se*

Encourage - This Could Lead to Arguments, CD

Each track on *Encourage's This Could Lead to Arguments*, is a short burst—none much longer than two minutes—of sonic heaven: swelling assaults of distortion that cut to ringing emptiness, static-ridden, echoey interludes, and slashing, driving guitars above drowsy bass lines. Think the best of My Bloody Valentine, the Applesseed Cast, Codeine, and Seam. Rising, impassioned, and melodic vocals like those on "Out With the Gas Can," or "Limitations," or "She Dreamt of Texas, 1979," make you wish that a band like Codeine had been doing similar things all those years ago: adding variety and feeling to their numbing songs. Nostalgic somehow, yet totally new, this is one of the best things to come out of Detroit all year. (AMB) *Down Peninsula Audio, downpeninsula.com*

Angello, Nik - Legion, CD

If this album were an extracurricular activity, it would be Mathletes (this reviewer was a member; he knows). Legion drips with dorkiness. If there's anyone who can make hip hop un-cool, Nik Angello might be the man for the job. Except for a couple obligatory cameos from chanteuses and another rapper, Angello is solely responsible for the production and vocals. More often than not, the synthesized production sounds like it comes straight outta '83. As a lyricist, he can turn a superfluous yet entertaining phrase. As a rapper, he does not spit; he enunciates in a ridiculous nasal monotone. Consequently, the songs seem studied and lack spontaneity. When Angello raps, "Make way for the pimps and hoes," in the hook of "Make Way," he, as a narrator, is as reliable as a Yugo. A "Slo Mo" version of "Make Way" appears as a bonus track. At the slower playback speed, Angello sounds less like a chipmunk with a cold and a little more like a credible hip-hop artist. So why does he not reduce the speed of all his tracks? Or is this version playing at actual speed? Would someone deliberately release a record of songs with accelerated playback speeds? Is Angello serious? If not, do people think his act is funny? Either way, most people outside of Angello's homes of San Diego and Nashville will feel like they're outside an inside joke. (JM)

Widows Peek Entertainment, widowspeek.com

Antlerand - Branches, CD

The pet rock came in a package that sold companionship, convenience, and ingenuity. Inside, all you had was a rock. That's the way I feel about this album,

the first by a long-distance consortium of musicians called Antlerand. The packaging is very impressive, all fractals and colorful modernism. I wish I could say as much about the music. Antlerand bring a very tired sound to the ears: arena emo too short on bombast to have an impact on anyone. The production is so pleasantly clear that it betrays the stunning lack of substance in the group's sound; oftentimes, too much is happening on too few instruments, while at others, too little is happening on too many, which leaves this listener feeling as if he's not hearing the whole thing, that there are parts missing. The lyrics are a joke of the high school composition notebook study hall poet, and hearing the words strung together as they are with a straight face is just short of impossible. I wonder who made the decision to send this disc to this magazine, but I'll just go ahead and assume that the average *Punk Planet* reader would see through this kind of trite, unimaginative horseshit immediately. After all, you don't own a pet rock, do you? (JJC)

Army of the Pharaohs - The Torture Papers, CD

Good lord, this is a dense release. Showcasing your crew's microphone firepower is one thing, but putting nine MC's on the first track is just overwhelming. Wait, whose verse is this? I know the Wu-Tang Clan did it on "Triumph," but they had already established their voices and production style for a few years and over the course of a number of solo records. *The Torture Papers*, on the other hand, presents itself as an album when it's really just a smorgasbord label sampler of 12 MC's and DJ's eager to ascend to the next level of the game. While their lyrical skills, production, and themes are excellent, there is simply too much to keep track of. (DH)

Babygrande, babygrande.com

Augustine - Broadcast, CD

Augustine is a relatively new band out of Memphis, TN, and Broadcast is their first full-length effort for obscure indie label Makeshift Music. To say that this is an impressive first album would be an understatement. Augustine have a sound that can easily be thought-bombed into a thousand different categories and comparisons, but what I hear most is a kind of updated LA jangle-psych, proto-goth, paisley underground sound, filtered through a decade of sweater-sensitive college-rock influences, but with just as many moments of Brit-pop bombast and southern-fried stoner riffage to keep things interesting. The group is comprised of what can only be described as accomplished songwriters and musicians who manage to keep the sound tight and efficient, even when the song demands sprawl. Guitars solo in and out of some of the tracks, but when they do, it's more like hitting the sweet spot than the snooze button. The lyrics, too, are an accomplishment. Though they may be thematically sketchy at parts, the band must be given credit for taking a serious approach to their words, and allowing them to be the centerpiece of what are already solid arrangements. So, all in all, Broadcast is a solid work, one that'll likely get repeat plays for this guy. If you're still not sold, check out the band's website, augustineband.com—the whole album's free to stream once you get past the front page. (JJC)

Makeshift Music, makeshiftmusic.com

Bayside - Acoustic, CD

On their double-disc CD/DVD release, Bayside loses any sort of edge formerly possessed by their full-banded, hook-loaded, borderline emo-rock in favor of stripped down acoustics. Following the death of their drummer in a tragic van accident last winter, Bayside continued touring—initially as an acoustic duo—before reforming electrically. Consequently, the disc is either a result of the well-received performances, or possibly another successful Victory Records profit ploy. The redone versions of the songs, plus an additional new track (a thinly veiled tribute to their lost bandmate and friend) are played out flawlessly with an endless supply of youthful melody and harmony, but are overbearing tacky, and will evidently cater more so to the John Mayer crowd than with anyone whose tastes lie with heavier sounds. Considering the band is often rightfully criticized as a blatant Smoking Popes rip-off, the cover of “Meghan,” featuring Josh Caterer himself, probably wasn’t the best of ideas. To make things worse, the included rendition of Elliot Smith’s “Baby Britain” may induce nausea. For this grand release, the band and label decided to hire on the production efforts of the famed team who brought the wonders of Mandy Moore and Aaron Carter to the top of the charts, which I’m sure will drive the teeming teenie-bopping masses into sheer ecstasy. Regrettably, in my opinion, one of Victory’s only chances for musical redemption has gone over to the dark side, and the label has reached a whole new low. (BM)
Victory Records, 346 North Justine, Suite 504 Chicago, IL 60607
victoryrecords.com

Black Time - Midnight World, LP

England’s Black Time is probably the most erudite band in the world. My sister’s boyfriend, Mr. Sundance guy, told me Black Time got their name from some avant-garde film. (If it’s not a John Belushi flick, it’s over my head.) Anyway, I heard through the grapevine that these guys and gal like Claude Bessy, Crime, Huggy Bear, and (maybe) Rocket From the Tombs. Okay, Punk Planet’s own Mor Fleisher told me that, because she interviewed lead singer Lemmy Caution. Anyway, this is pure, lo-fi trash that’ll brighten your mood. I mean, it’s kind of like Wire, had they not gotten pretentious and started sucking the fat one. That in mind, it’s about time Black Time took on Wire in Jeopardy. They could bill it “Art Punk Showdown!” That’d be fun. Anyway, yeah, this is great. What’d you expect from Black Time and in the Red Records? (RL)
In the Red Records, intheredrecords.com

Bleachers, the - Suspicion, CD

Recorded by the band in their home studio, Las Vegas’ the Bleachers have crafted a grippingly intense debut full-length, dense in both production and arrangement. *Suspicion* is an unblemished and relatively innovative unification of shoe-gazing fundamentals and post-rock psychedelics. Aided in part by a wide array of effects, tonal shifts, fades, and pans, the listening experience commands respect when listened to on headphones. It’s more than evident that the band has put in their work and paid attention to detail; the result is a cinematic and all-encompassing work that exceeds the standardized boundaries

of album composition. I suppose that folks who live in Vegas and don’t fancy stifling desert heat or casino binging might have tons of free time on their hands. I for one am thankful that the lads in the Bleachers chose to spend theirs wisely. (BM)

Village Industries, PO Box 71976 Las Vegas, NV 89170
bleachers-music.net

Bleeding Kansas - Dead Under Décor, CD

Can’t wait for the next Converge album? You could do far worse than this debut album from Burbank-based Bleeding Kansas. I couldn’t help but wonder whether producer Kurt Ballou raised an eyebrow or two during the making of this record, as so much of the material on *Dead Under Décor* sounds like it was directly lifted from a Converge album. Later, utterly aware of the lameness of their name, Bleeding Kansas drop in a few bars of Kansas’ “Carry on Wayward Son” in a vain attempt at knowing wink-wink irony. Stop it lads, you’re just making it worse. Demerits aside, this is still a very respectable debut; a little more originality could make a sophomore effort something to look forward to. (CL)

Abacus, abacusrecordings.com

Blight - Detroit: the Dream is Dead, CD

Bight was a short-lived band spawned from the ashes of the Fix and featured Tesco Vee on vocals. They played a few shows and recorded a handful of songs, most of which ended up on a 7” EP that Touch & Go Records put out in 1982. This CD compiles that, along with pretty much anything else they ever committed to tape: the first nine songs comprise the recording session that the EP came from, two more songs from a demo that pre-dates the EP, and then the same nine songs recorded live in Detroit in 1982. While this band was made up of members of two legendary Midwest hardcore bands, Blight sounds nothing like either the Fix or the Meatmen. They were really experimental and had more in common with Flipper than with anything else. The songs were abrasive, odd, and clanky, but that was the charm of Blight, and it’s great to see this long-forgotten and overlooked band given such a quality reissue. The booklet contains liner notes by Tesco and Steve, featuring lyrics and some flyers and photos. It really is a nice package and a great document of a portion of Midwestern punk rock history. Kudos to Touch & Go for finally dusting off some of these rare recordings, and I hope it is a sign of things to come. (MXV)

Touch & Go Records, PO Box 25520, Chicago, IL 60625, touchand-gorecords.com

Bodies Lay Broken - Excratation of Exiguous Exequies, CD

Back when Anal Cunt was still capable of wit, they had a song called “Abomination of Unnecessarily Augmented Composition Monikers.” I’m only going to type out one of BLB’s next-level Carcass-inspired abominations: “Gangroidal Femitidinous Albeit Lesionitized *Musca Domestica*.” No shit. This is a re-issue of a 2002 LP with 27 tracks that take Carcass’ template and warp it into hyper-ridiculousness until everything’s under two minutes long and blindingly fast. Which means, obviously, that it rules. The vocals are nothing but Steer/Walker’s high/low tandem translated to gurgles. I rarely quote from a bio in a review, but check it out: “The machine-like qual-

themes like school lunches and ding-dong ditching, FYP were the pinnacle of youthful pop aggression. Toys That Kill evolved from the ashes of FYP (FYP named its swan song album *Toys That Kill* in 2000), spawning the new band the same way the band All grew off from the Descendents. FYP’s *Toys That Kill* album was a perfect appetizer for the first proper Toys That Kill album, 2001’s melodic lo-fi punk masterpiece, *The Citizen Abortion*. 2003’s *Control the Sun* is just as strapping, and now the band returns with what is possibly their strongest release to date, *Shanked!*

Also available on CD for listeners who prefer their raw punk diluted digitally, *Shanked!* is one of the finest albums of the new millennium. Toys That Kill manages to mix their juvenile sensibility with post-punk complexity to create songs that both fans of simple raw punk and fans of innovative mature punk can worship. The lyrics are as tongue-in-cheek as ever, but also contain tinges of sorrow and politics that began to creep in on their previous albums. Standout tracks include “Bomb Sniffin’ Dogs” (Bomb sniffin’ dogs at my door / My rabbit’s foot was their hors d’oeuvre), “They Tied Up All Our Lace” (And when the hearts are bumpin’ and you still feel nothing / Just act real cool ‘cause they do that shit on reality TV), and “31 Year-Old Daydream” (The rain came down as I started this song / A song where I wanted to say all that’s wrong / About backstabbers and boring scenes / But I’m a 31-year-old daydream).

The recording captures the band’s live sound tremendously, not an easy task given the tenuous fine line Toys That Kill straddles between acuity and sloppiness. The temptation to record a band like Toys That Kill with super-clean production values and add distortion post production must weigh heavy on their engineers, but the production here sounds like much of it was done live. Many of the garage-rock bands of today rely on effects to achieve a lo-fi sound, but Toys That Kill’s production seems to focus on making the records sound as authentically like the band’s live show as possible.

Having seen Toys That Kill perform three times (once on each coast and once in the Midwest), I must note that they are simply amazing live. FYP were always too sloppy for comfort at their concerts, oftentimes so off that their fans couldn’t even tell what songs they were playing. Unlike FYP, Toys That Kill is one of the best live bands of our time, delivering the goods consistently, whether it’s at a show in their hometown or on the road. *Shanked!* is as fine an introduction to Toys That Kill as any. Let’s hope their next three albums are essential as the initial trilogy. — Art Ettinger

Recess Records, PO Box 1666, San Pedro, CA 90733, recessrecords.com

**Against All Authority - The Restoration of Chaos & Order, CD**

The subject of my Reviewer Spotlight in *Punk Planet* 74, Against All Authority are back with a new full-length on Hopeless Records, their best since moving to the label. Having largely forsaken their ska-punk roots on the last couple of records, the band once again pays homage to the reggae and third-wave ska that was such a large influence on their early recordings. This is best exemplified on the terrific “Silence is Golden but Duct Tape is Silver,” “Sweet Televised Destruction,” and “Radio Waves.”

Make no mistake about it, however—Against All Authority is now primarily a punk rock band with hardcore tendencies and a lot of built-up anger. The ska and reggae influences, while once again an important part of the melody, don’t water down the fury with which the band careens through each song. Having always been outspoken, the band found a lot of material to scream about since their last record. Covering many of the issues (mis)reported on the 24-hour news networks, lead singer Danny Lore and crew don’t shy away with the scathing commentary that brings their perspective to clear view. And while the majority of *The Restoration of Chaos & Order* deals with political and social issues, including “Sunshine Fist Magnet”—a moving tribute to Brian Deneke, there are also a number of songs embracing the punk/DIY lifestyle—namely “I Just Wanna Start a Circle Pit,” “All Ages Show Tonight,” and the aforementioned “Radio Waves.” A large part of the band’s longevity—they’ve been playing since 1992—has been their ability to remain relevant and carry some weight with their sincere brand of punk, and all of those qualities are on display with *The Restoration of Chaos & Order*, a punk rock record with substance—something the scene has been largely devoid of in recent years. (BN)

Hopeless Records, PO Box 7495, Van Nuys, CA 91409, hopelessrecords.com

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tones, Flying Saucer Attack blazes in higher-pitched treble. It's appropriate to listen at high volume; you will find that for such an abrasive sound, the music is actually quite soothing.

Take Five: Six Organs of Admittance, *The Sun Awakens*; V/A, *Rebop: the Savoy Remixes*; Mice Parade, *Obrigado Saudade*; Dictaphone, *Vertigo II*; Cinemekanika, *The Martial Arts* (reviewed this issue).



Reviewer Spotlight: Anthony Bartkewicz (AB)

Muffs, the, *Blonder and Blonder*. When the Muffs come up, someone will invariably mention Kim Shattuck's scream. No question, her ability to go from pop singing to flat-out screaming is a big part of the Muffs' sound, but it overshadows her creativity and skill as a guitarist. On *Blonder and Blonder*, the band's second album, seemingly simple songs like "Oh Nina" and "On and On" use unique chords and tricky structures while still being catchy as hell. This is the one with the Fruitopia commercial "Sad Tomorrow" and bubblegum-Stooges "Ethyl My Love," plus a bunch of other fairly brilliant pop tunes. Around the release of *Blonder*, I saw the Muffs play a small club on a night that was 90+ degrees outside and unbearably sweaty and humid inside. Drummer Roy McDonald actually passed out from the heat at the end of their set, yet still limped back to his drums for an encore. That's as punk rock as something as un-punk as an encore can be.

Top five bands, Maryland Death Fest 2006: Sayyadina, Yacopsae, Demilich, Disfear, Butcher ABC.



Reviewer Spotlight: Andrea Bussell (AMB)

Laughing Hyenas, *Crawl* EP. Not too long ago, I was lucky enough to see John Brannon fronting his current band, Easy Action, in his hometown of Detroit. The show was so heavy and so ruthless, that by the end of it, my vision was blurred and my head was pounding. This is the sort of shit only a few people can do to an audience from a stage (or on a record) and of these few people, John Brannon is definitely one of the best.

Some time after the dissolution of Brannon's perhaps best known band, Negative Approach, came the formation of Laughing Hyenas and the recording of the brutal, little gem of an EP, *Crawl*. The four songs on it are deceptively simple—different from the balls-out punk of Negative Approach—foregrounding the absolute violence of Brannon's voice above some low, bluesy rock. Listening to Brannon fronting Laughing Hyenas, the agony of complete desperation, pain, and anger seem more tangible than just about any other expressions of them. When he sings, "I've been down / but never been so low" you really believe him and seriously don't want to know what that's like. But the best thing about *Crawl* is that it never really manages to be depressing. Brannon's voice does the work of showing that while "it don't seem like it's getting any better," there's a total force in accepting that.

Current Rotation: 24 Gone, *The Spin*; the Twilight Singers, *Powder Burns* (reviewed this issue at punkplanet.com); the Pernice Brothers, *Yours, Mine and Ours*; Cary Ann Hearst, *Dust and Bones* (reviewed this issue); Mark Lanegan, *Bubblegum*.



Reviewer Spotlight: Mairéad Case (MC)

Andrews Sisters, the, *Rhum & Coca-Cola*. The Andrews Sisters—LaVerne, Maxene, and Patti—were three Minnesotans who sang about seafood and Coca-Cola. They sang in German and English, on radio, vinyl, and with Bing Crosby, as well as acted in several Abbott and Costello films. In the 1940s, their trumpet-happy "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy" ("not to mention LaVerne's red hair," quip horndog discographies) was a hit with the soldiers overseas. "They made him blow a bugle for his Uncle Sam," the three trill. "It really brought him down because he couldn't jam." I like the Andrews Sisters for their whole wheat, pre-Feminine Mystique style and birdlike harmonies, but more importantly for the historical grit lurking 'neath the wholesomeness. Their albums, re-labeled *Hitler's Marching Songs*, were smuggled into post-war Germany, and once bandleader Vic Schoen left, the trio was more or less kaput.

Little Early-Pearly in her Curly-Wurly: Liverburst, demo; MSTRKRFT, *The Looks*; Luworm, *Birdsongs*; Odetta, *At the Gates of Horn*; the Old Haunts, *Fuel on Fire* (reviewed this issue).



Reviewer Spotlight: Vincent Chung (VC)

April March and Los Cincos, *S/T*. I know it's summertime and you want Beach Boys records to listen to with the top down, but let me discuss one of my favorite albums to throw on after a snowstorm. It's perfect listening for when one's buried inside their abode, sipping brandy, and reading yesterday's paper for the fifth time. The wait can be especially tedious, especially if you grew up in the South like me and had to walk across the backyard to go to relieve one's loins. In 1998, the American Francophile pop singer (and former cartoon animator) April March teamed up with the skilled psych-garage outfit Los Cincos to record a compelling collection of underground pop. On their self-titled release, April March eschews her quirkiness while psych-garage outfit Los Cincos tones it down, and the resulting compromise is an astoundingly sophisticated piece of work—at least for a record on Sympathy for the Record Industry. Its restraint exudes stylish charm, while subtly pulling from influences such as bossa nova, surf, French pop, '60s AM radio, ambient noise, and lounge. "Last Train to

ity of Bodies Lay Broken's form, achieved through rigorous abstraction, is the first expression of a peculiarly modern outlook leading to classicism. This consciousness was allied to a form of anarchism descended from indifference." Also, these guys are from Minnesota, but all of the samples are in foreign languages. WTF? (AB)

(Deathvomit Records, PO Box 4815, Fremont CA 94539-4815, neopolisrecords.com.)

Book of Maps - S/T, CD

Book of Maps pound out several routes of math-rock artistry from Portland, Oregon. As a trio of the basic, primal type—guitar, bass, and drums—they concoct pieces that shape-shift, detour, and turn on a note. It's all performed tightly as well, sometimes in the unison of conjunction, or with the three seemingly soloing in cognizance of each other. What separates Book of Maps from standard math-rock is the use of '70s rock stylings: the prog-rock sound of the guitar and the occasional keyboards, the freewheeling nature of solos, and the occasional, near anthemic touch of their riffs. However, the screaming vocals of Christopher Baumann have more affinity with hardcore punk. Most of it is, of course, quite hard, but on their pair of tracks concerning the Queen frontman, "Freddie Mercury Equals Who?" answered later by "Freddie Mercury Equals You," the music slows down somewhat, even if the notes and drums are still hit as hard. This is the second album from this talented group, and it's worth seeking out. (BA)

Whoa!boat Records, PO Box 1548, Portland, OR 97207, whoaabout.com

The Brotherhood of Electricity - Invisible 7"

The A-side of this 7" features one track that starts off with some interesting keyboards, which made me think this was going to be a '70s punk throwback, but then it quickly morphs into a sort of '90s noisy post-punk number that just blazes ahead at pretty much the same tempo for the next few minutes. The recording quality is a bit thin, but the song itself is decent enough and had this come out in the early 1990s, it would have seen heavy rotation and mixtape additions. The flip side features two songs; one original track with a Southern type of indie rock feel and a completely uncalculated Negative Approach. I will scratch that side off this record and keep it only for the A-side. (MXV)

Super Secret!, PO Box 1585, Austin, TX 78767

Caliban - The Undying Darkness, CD

Caliban's new album starts with a ponderous reverberated piano intro, and their new promo photos definitely show some members wearing mascara. Hey guys, c'mon—you're not Evanesence. Appearances aren't deceiving; this is definitely the most commercial-sounding Caliban album yet, with some nice hooks to complement their usual emo-tinged metalcore. While they're one of the few bands in the genre that understand that having memorable songs makes the music heavier, the profusion of clean vocals had me checking the credits for Morten Harket, and the saccharine quotient has been significantly upped, presumably with one eye on the charts. Still, this is very much the same band that you already either love or hate. They're still heavy, catchy, and the songs still linger for a couple minutes longer than they should. Sadly though, Caliban still hasn't made

the great album that a band as mature and talented as this should be capable of. (CL)

Abacus, abacusrecords.com

Ceremonial Snips/The Delegates - Split, 7"

What we have here is a great little release that'll likely pass under the radar of most listeners, and that's a great shame. Side A contains two tracks by Ceremonial Snips, a melodic punk band with traces of ska influence in the way of a good horn section. The end result is slightly reminiscent of the Filaments, but with an edge that is much more raw. Side B belongs to the Delegates, a much underrated band that also utilizes a horn section to accentuate their brand of melodic punk. Both of the band's contributions are immediate classics, with "Pink Shoes in a Petri Dish" spending a considerable amount of time on repeat. This is one of those times that a split has served its purpose—both bands can count me as a fan. (BN)

thedelegates.com, ceremonialsnips.com

Cex - Actual Fucking, CD

Cex, the alter-ego of Tigerbeat6's Ryan Kidwell, plays crazy-amazing shows. He rambles, shakes his blonde locks, and sometimes strips to his boxers, all in the name of the party. The eight new songs on *Actual Fucking*—each named for a US city and all (more or less) themed after following your boner—work well in this situation. Sometimes, and especially with the added torch-y spark of Roby Newton (vox) and Cale Parks (drums), they're brilliant. On CD, though, much of this spontaneity is lost. There are still a few glorious moments (the rhythms in "Baltimore" stick like superglue), but all the dicks 'n' dudes rhetoric drained my own horn like a blade to a cyst. Live, Cex is actually fucking; here, he's just jacking off. If your politics allow you to overlook this, then you'll dig the album, but I'm saving my pennies for the next tour. (MC)

Automation, automationrecords.com

Cinemekanika - The Martial Arts, CD

Here's a solid, articulate four-piece out of Athens, GA that is tight as hell. Lots of math rock is impressive for its musicianship and mercurial patterns, but most often that is only accomplished through the music alone—meaning it's primarily instrumentals that are put out. Cinemekanika, on the other hand, also play with vocal lines that eschew typical lyrical structures. Also, sometimes bands with talent can show you the technicality, but lack when it comes to actual compositions (e.g., Joe Satriani may be regarded as a talented guitarist, but I wouldn't recommend listening to his albums). That's not a problem with *The Martial Arts*: these songs have a drive that's felt deep in the muscles. The guitars are sharp, clean, and quick on the draw; the drums have machine-gun snares and multilayered rhythms, and the bass lines have hooks of their own. These songs are turbulent and unrelenting, shifting gears to speeds that almost outpace your ability to follow. They downshift as readily with as much ease to erratic, guitar-picked melodies that skip all over the scale. Well done. (BA)

Hello Sir Records, 750 1/2 W. Broad St., Apt. A-1, Athens, GA 30601, hellosirrecords.com

Clockcleaner - Missing Dick/By the Door, 7"

Here are two songs from the same session as *The Hassler* EP. As with all Clockcleaner releases, you are

presented with mind-melting noisy rock. "Missing Dick" was re-recorded for the *Nevermind* album. This version seems a little bit faster and more blown-out sounding. It's not a better or worse version, just different. The flip is a Crucifucks cover. "By the Door" is the song that I always found the most annoying on the first Crucifucks record. I'm sure a lot of people would agree with me on that one. It's only natural that Clockcleaner would choose that song to cover. They either make music that you love, or they make your skin crawl. It's a way of weeding out the weak. I'm still here and I'm still listening. In my brain, this record is essential. In everyone else's brains? It should be, or your musical taste is seriously in question. What else do I need to say to make you buy this? (DA)

Hit Dat Records, 3233 Sonia Trail, Ellcott City, MD 21043, hitdatrecords.com

Codebreaker - What Is This Earth Love?, CD

In case you've been in a coma or not alive for the last 25 years, electronic duo Codebreaker is providing unintentional history lessons. On their debut album, *What Is This Earth Love?*, Codebreaker gives their revisionist take on dance music trends. There are songs too joyful to be Depeche Mode or Duran Duran ("I Believe in Sound" and "Used to Know"), post-punk spasms with inept drumming ("Dirty Angel" and "What Is This Earth Love?"), and scrappy, under-produced electro pop ("Beat Electrique," "Saturn Life" and "Caller"). There is a clear appreciation for the finer parts of the aforementioned styles, but Codebreaker's attempts at the same are flat. While it would have been nice if the group created a new niche in electronic music, I would have settled for picking one section of the past and perfecting it. Trying to cover so much ground has stretched the duo too thin to be taken seriously. As an amusing aside: coincidentally, I have a blog called Codebreaker. Good choice of assignments, editors! (SRM)

Codebreaker Music Headquarters, 1023 N. Old World Third St. Milwaukee, WI 53202

Crimson Spectre/Uwharria - Split, CD

My immediate reaction upon seeing the cover art was that this was going to be lame metalcore. Don't get me wrong, all the art on this release is amazing. I wouldn't go as far as saying that the music is amazing, but both bands are really good. Crimson Spectre reminds me of an even mix of Tear it Up, Rorschach, and Orchid. It's an interesting combination, but it works well for them. I definitely will seek out their future releases. Uwharria has a similar sound, but with an added touch of crossover. They're good, but the lesser of the two by far. The lyrics are pretty absurd and the vocalist lacks depth. What keeps me listening are the catchy riffs. Even with those few detractors, this is a release that stands up better than most of this genre. I would recommend this for fans of bands like Textbook Traitors and Orchid. (DA)

Magic Bullet Records, 17 Argyle Hills Dr, Fredericksburg, VA 22405 magicbulletrecords.com

Dietzche V. & the Abominable Snowman - Bromance, 7"

While I'm not exactly sure who made the music on this 7" (Is it one band name? A collaboration?), the music leaves a clearer impression. This release attempts to recreate the feel-good vibes and potent

cheese factor of Italo electro and synth pop. When needle is put to vinyl, pleasant vibes bound from the speakers and cheese swarms the ears—a distant, future third cousin of Giorgio Moroder or New Order. But there's a significant ingredient missing in the aural batter: ingenuity. So much has happened since this kind of music first shook asses. The group's personality shows through only in the geeky and unfortunate vocals. The A-side, "Bromance," opens with pointless dialogue, then switches to a vocoder. Where Daft Punk's "Around the World" or Chromeo's "Needy Girl" whipped dancers into frenzy with the device, this track manages only indifference. The flip side tries to go without, and without the digital goo, the vocals strain to stay on pitch. Of the two songs, "The Chant" is a bit more interesting, especially during the instrumental sections. The steady dance beat and decent sounding slap bass synth are definite improvements on the weak -side. Though this 7" would fit in the record crates of celebrity hipster DJs, your collections, dear readers, will be fine without it. (SRM)

Pop Echo Records, 12424 - 113 Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta, T5M 2W5, Canada betweensthesixes.com/popecho

Duckmandu - Fresh Duck for Rotting Accordionists, CD

In what has to be one of the funniest gimmicks I've seen in a long time, Duckmandu is a one-man accordionist, and this CD is his rendition of the entire Dead Kennedy's album, *Fresh Fruit for Rotting Vegetables*. The disc opens with his accordianized rendition of the 2001 theme (AKA Ric Flair's ring entrance music) and then goes song for song through the Dead Kennedy's album, closing with a few bonus tracks. Normally, I'm not a fan of covers, but this was so unique and hilarious that I couldn't help but get a kick out of it, and I can guarantee it that this disc is going to make for a lot of drunken fun at some future parties. Ironically, the cover of this CD spoofs the wrong album; it's a parody of *In God We Trust, Inc.* which features a duck up on a cross with an accordion around its neck. Congratulations, Duckmandu, for this is the first time I'm not opposed to someone doing covers of old punk songs. (MXV)

Self-released, duckmandu.com

Eastern Youth - 365-Step Blues, CD

This might come as a surprise to some of our younger readers, but emo used to mean something other than shaggy hair, screen-printed everything, and challenging Myspace.com profiles. One of the few bands that remember reverently is Eastern Youth. The Japanese trio formed in the '90s and have been pouring out serious feelings over relentless riffs since. *365-Step Blues*, the group's sophomore album, finds the group still dedicated to the style. Vocalist/guitarist Hisashi Yoshino hurls his lyrics at listeners as if it hurts too much to keep them in his throat. Raw with singing emotion, his voice is the perfect vehicle for his lyrics on alienation and helplessness, which read like Japanese poetry. While many of their songs are straightforward assaults, a few show a great deal of restraint and knowledge of jazz timing. Fans of emotional punk rock in the vein of early Cursive or Fugazi will not be disappointed by this rambunctiously driven release. Folks who list emo as an interest online might be sorely disappointed. (SRM)

Five One Inc. PO Box 1868, Santa Monica, CA 90406-1868 fiveoneinc.com



Bald Eagle - Bacon and Eggs, Dear, CD

Bald Eagle plays spastically riffificious hard rock with a looseness and fondness for groovy breakdowns. Justin Nardy's bass rumbles like a muscle car that needs a new muffler. Guitarists Danny Matteson and Mikey Wheeler play on top of each other's guitars like caged puppies climbing on one another and clamoring for attention. Justin McCrady attacks his drums like a mutant Keith Moon with extra tentacles. "Do a Backflip, Jerk" is 2:10 of speedy rock with fast, heavy chords that eventually emphasize string scraping, harmonics, and various other noisy guitar techniques during an instrumental break. A horn section increases the tension and adds extra dynamic oomph to "The Carl Weathers Report." In "Wind up Dead in a Camaro," horns add a little Memphis to Bald Eagle's Missouri melting pot of rock. Album closer "Sniffing Glue and Casual Sex" begins shockingly quiet and showcases guest violinist Lucas Allen. It's a strong end to an exciting album that, nonetheless, sags during a few of the middle tracks. Bald Eagle accomplishes a lot by picking and choosing elements of hardcore, hard rock, emo, soul, and even a bit of Sly Stone-style psychedelic funk for its tracks. Some of the songs feel a bit deflated, though, after repeat listens. The audacious performances—and even the song titles and artwork—on the album show that Bald Eagle can be a fun, spontaneous band. Some tracks, such as "Salute the Damned," capture a band that wants to stretch its wings but needs to stay in flight school a little longer. Although it is a fine album, *Bacon and Eggs, Dear* suggests two things: First, Bald Eagle probably is more thrilling to hear when it perches on stage during a live show. And second, they're still maturing musically. (JM)

Collective Records, collectiverecords.com; Emergency Umbrella Records, emergencyumbrella.com



Biram, Scott H. - Graveyard Shift, CD

So, the alarm rings at like eight a.m. Lord only knows what the fuck I'd been dreaming about. Might've sucked, might've not, but regardless, the fucking alarm jarred me out of the little piece of peace I was experiencing. So that sucks, but I gotta get up, get out, and earn that cash, right? Literally hobble to the kitchen goin' like, "I'm never gonna" get fucked up the night before work again." Saying it over and over like a fuckin' mantra as I wait for the coffee to perk so I can drink some, get the shit taste out of

my mouth, and get enough energy to make some grits & eggs (breakfast of champions, folks). Still a shitty morning, but hey, coffee's comin'. Get me a little caffeine kick and decide to put on some music and cook. Bam! Just got the new Scott H. Biram, *Graveyard Shift*, in the mail, so I put that sucker on. I've liked Biram's stuff well enough in the past—the whole blues/country/punk, one-man-band, street performer thing works well for him. First thing I hear is this dude, basically telling it like it is, saying stuff like, "You know most times I can't sleep at night / I just drive the highway up and down / Sometimes I can't get a bite at all / Sometimes I bite off more than I can chew," etc. The album plays on, and it's all these insanely awesome country/blues numbers about love, reefer, girls, god, death, trucks, and work that, whether realistically or figuratively, I can totally apply to my life experience thus far. Hearing this dude lay it all out makes me feel good, like less alone, lonely, whatever. And the day starts looking a lot better. The monotonous rigamarole I'm gonna have to face during my waking hours seems like it's gonna be alright, you know? Now, some days turn out horrible and some turn out killer, but either way, having these tunes rolling around in my head helps to keep me going. And that's why I've been listening to this shit from sunup to sundown. (AJ)

Bloodshot Records, 3039 W Irving Park Rd., Chicago, IL 60618, bloodshotrecords.com



Chevreuil - Capoeira, CD

Chevreuil are a French duo of math-rock artisans that build cacophonous tapestries that will make you wonder how only two people could have mustered that sound, particularly when no overdubs are involved. At their core, it is Tony C. on a guitar set through various amplifiers and effects pedals, matched by the polyrhythmic Julien F. on drums, who pounds like rock 'n' roll, but in patterns of near jazz. The guitarist will also tap on a synth with a primitive sound for some tracks. They often employ atypical time

signatures and breakaway shifts of mood or intensity. The old sound of the synths gives it a distant quality that is offset by the erratic, free nature of the drums and guitar. Throughout most of the album, the tight coordination of the two is impressive, while at other moments—which can happen at any instant—they almost seem to be competing for dominance of the sound. This is their third album for Sick Room, after *Chateauvallon* and *Sport*, and it was recorded by Steve Albini, who provides a raw context that highlights the instrumentation of both. Tony C's synth sounds creepy on "Cannibal Lover," as his sturdy guitar churns on a mesmeric riff before other guitar tones bubble in at other frequencies. On "Gendarme," as well as other songs, his use of delays and other effects allows for simultaneous guitar sounds, all of which are put to good use. On "Chanteur de de Charme," they really put forth a singular style with guitar notes like chimes and drone-y hums coming irregularly throughout; it makes for a beautiful piece that is too short at less than two minutes. Predominantly, like a lot of math rock and post-rock, Chevreuil play instrumentals, but on the last track, "Solier Supérieur," they are joined by Jamie Stewart of Xiu Xiu, who contributes some vocals. It's worth checking out, as their

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Christmas" is the album's standout track and worth the album's purchase price alone. With Petra and Tanya Haden's (the former being the brain behind That Dog) sweeping strings, and lush harmonies, it's the perfect song to end a holiday mixtape. While only eight songs—one being an instrumental reprise of "Last Train to Christmas" and another being a trippy Stones cover—this collaboration fits on every record shelf. Oh, and Benett Rogers makes an appearance, if I haven't sold you already.

Do You Believe in Magic? The Cuts, *From Here on Out*; Integrity, *Those Who Fear Tomorrow*; Beyond the Valley of the Dolls soundtrack; the Marked Men, *Fix My Brain*; Curtis Mayfield's Chicago Soul compilation.



Reviewer Spotlight: Art Ettinger (AE)

V/A, *Swimming in the Secret C*. While obsessing over the recent Bananas vinyl reissues, I couldn't resist the temptation to revisit the classic Secret Center compilations that first introduced me to the band. A follow up to the label's excellent cassette comps, 1996's CD compilation *Swimming in the Secret C* remains the best compilation of its type to date. 18 like-minded sloppy pop bands contributed these lo-fi tunes that stood out as supremely catchy, even during the '90s pop-punk boom. While other bands were focusing on slick production, these outrageous acts dwelled solely on the songwriting. Operation: Cliff Clavin remains well known, but most of the bands on this comp have been forgotten already. I'm not certain if any of the bands (other than the Bananas) are active anymore, but standout tracks include "Chelsea" by Smedley and the Space Cadets, "Shit Colored" by Magpie, "The Winter Sucks" by Ferd Mert, and "Taco Bell" by the Dorks. Believe it or not, this home grown compilation is still available from many distributors. Even if you missed it ten years ago, there's still time to swim in the "Secret C."

Besides my obsession with the new punk-tinged wayward youth movie *Mouth to Mouth*, I've also made time to obsess over these releases: V/A, *Anti-Disco League Vol.1*; Carbonas, *S/T*; Reducers SF, *Raise Your Hackles*; the Bananas, *Forbidden Fruit* (another Bananas reissue on vinyl for the first time); Limp Wrist, *Want Us Dead*.



Reviewer Spotlight: Mor Fleisher (MF)

Girl Trouble, *Thrillsphere*. Girl Trouble don't get much press anymore, do they? I had only heard the name until a couple weeks ago. (The big record store I go to in Hollywood has validated parking. If you don't get your ticket stamped, it's \$4 to leave the parking lot. Girl Trouble's record, by comparison, was \$2.99.) They're unbelievable, though. I like the Mo Tucker-esque drumming and the fact that the band's been the same (same band members, same everything) since the mid-'80s. Not many can claim that. Essentially really brutal garage music, Girl Trouble songs are good. They're good 'cause I could have written them, and that's not a put-down. I mean, the Gories are better, but this is more personal. A record collector's band.

Listen here: The Orlons, *South Side/Not Me 7"*; Shangri-Las, *Anything You Can Get Your Hands On!*; Thee Headcoatees, *Girlsville*; Little Eva, *Locomotion*; Tina Turner, *Country My Way*.



Reviewer Spotlight: Kristen Grayewski (KG)

Yo La Tengo, *Fakebook*. This album starts off with a slide of steel guitar backed by the gentle thump of a double bass, brushed drums, and an acoustic guitar. Then, Ira Kaplan enters with his unassuming, everyman croon. Once he's going, Georgia Hubley creeps in, as ever, with the single most lazily beautiful "la la ah." It's there, in her constant, understated harmonies, that I'm won over every time. They sound like contentment. And this album, a shuffle through some of Yo La Tengo's favorite numbers to cover, demonstrates just how well they can transform a forgotten tune ("Tried So Hard" by the Flying Burrito Brothers, or some barn-buster called "Griselda") into a graceful web of lap steel, acoustic folk-pop, fan-like admiration, and husband/wife vocals delivered as if they're finishing each other's sentences. For this album, Yo La Tengo are the Byrds, they're the guys playing at a bar by the highway, they're a band your parents could like. But they're themselves, too; five of the 16 songs are different versions of their own, redone with the gentle, country ease that typifies the rest of the LP. My personal favorite is their take on Cat Stevens' "Here Comes My Baby"—it's as if you've never heard the song before. This album is friendly at just the right times, and it explains how lovely restraint and a well-timed "la la ah" can be.

We cannot stop singing, we cannot start sinking: Smoosh, *Free to Stay*; Chisel, *8 a.m. All Day*; Destroyer, *Destroyer's Rubies*; Mountain Goats, *We Shall All be Healed*; Irma Thomas, *Straight From the Soul*.



Reviewer Spotlight: Eric Grubbs (EG)

Chomsky, *Onward Quirky Soldiers*. Of all the bands I followed in college, Dallas-based group Chomsky had a sound that was truly sans identifiable reference points. Though you might hear slight influences like XTC and the Police in spots, Chomsky's music had the flair of eccentric originality. Though the band went through a few line-ups over the years, this era of the band was their best. Hearing *Onward Quirky Soldiers* now, I'm still not exactly sure why they are so

Elliott, Ramblin' Jack - I Stand Alone, CD

Having dug ourselves into such a black hole of corporate conglomeration, fast food chains, and strip malls, the world could never again create a folk icon such as Ramblin' Jack Elliott. He is the physical manifestation of the traveling bard, the nomad, the anti-hero of literature, music, and art. Today, we are presented false idols of such a life—because it doesn't exist anymore. Every city looks the same, connected by an insidious network of interstates. The times and places of which Elliott sings no longer exist on a large scale. They have vanished, only to be memorialized in a song or book. We are left with imposters, mimicking the style and pathos of early folk musicians, wanting to be part of an American tradition either eradicated or slowly making its way towards extinction. In tow with another American musical legend, Johnny Cash, Ramblin' Jack Elliott's *I Stand Alone* is predominantly a covers album featuring such contemporary artists as Lucinda Williams, Corin Tucker, and Flea. But, very much unlike Johnny Cash's *American IV: The Man Comes Around*, Ramblin' Jack chooses an obscure mix of old folk and country songs, staying true to his legacy. Likewise, the majority of songs are performed by Elliott and his acoustic guitar; the younger, hipper accompaniments are barely noticeable. (In fact, I didn't notice them at all the first listen.) Elliott is the center of the music; his voice is worn and honest. A sad reminder of the way the country used to be, *I Stand Alone* reminds us of the openness of the United States, as when Elliott traveled its borders. Setting the groundwork for a folk tradition that went on to inspire cultural radicalism in the 1960s, Ramblin' Jack Elliott and *I Stand Alone* convey the simplicity of life and its freedoms and tribulations. (AJA) Anti, 2798 Sunset Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90026, anti.com

Fascist Fascist - S/T, LP

This is the vinyl version of a CDEP released on Reptilian Records, the record label started by the folks who run the incredible Baltimore-based record store of the same name. Reptilian is a top contender for best East Coast record store, but I digress. Fascist Fascist is a supergroup, made up of members of regionally well-known bands from the Baltimore area, including the Homosexuals and the Thumbs. They play lo-fi, pop-infused hardcore with raging female vocals. The songs have uncommonly humorous misanthropic lyrics with comedic titles to match, including "Working Women are Pissed Too But I Still Love You D. Boon" and "Declaration of Shit and Hatred of Mankind." The packaging is gorgeous: each 45 RPM LP is housed in a hand silk-screened cover, making this vinyl version critical for record collectors. (AE) Pop Faction Records, myspace.com/popfaction

Final Fantasy - He Poos Clouds, CD

Bizarre, bizarre, bizarre. Chamber music constructed around Dungeons & Dragon's eight schools of magic may not seem like an ideal premise for a record, but Owen Pallett pulls it off, and he does it with astonishing grace and seeming ease. Channeling Van Dyke Parks as readily as Stephen Prina or Xiu Xiu, Pallett builds relatively short chamber compositions around a stirring string quartet and carefully choreographed piano, harpsichord, and percussion parts. But the glue is Pallett's voice—delicate and vulnerable among a shifting sea of strings and dramatic arcs

of sound. Aside from the, um, uninviting title of the record, *He Poos Clouds* can feel borderline-flawless, from the jazzy Reclinerland-ish lullaby "This Lamb Sells Condos" and the sweeping (and sometimes roaring) wallop of "Many Lives -> 49 MP" to the highly percussive hop of "Song Song Song" and "The Pooka Sings," the morose and toned-down album-closing tear-jerker. This is a record from someone with more exciting work to come. Take note. (JV) Tomlab Records, tomlab.com

First Blood - Killafornia, CD

First of all, if you're going to replace "Cali" with something, at least make sure it rhymes! Punishment used "Killadelphia" for merch (sorry, Lamb of God, they were first), but *Killafornia* is like when a rapper forces a rhyme by mispronouncing one of the words. Anyway, when it comes to wind-milling, dance floor-based hardcore, *First Blood* are doing most everything right. Yeah, they have the obligatory posse photo in the booklet (complete with two guys who look like they're in the middle of talking shit), but that's OK. Unfortunately, records like this are always going to be measured against *Satisfaction* is the *Death of Desire*, but *First Blood* don't really imitate their hate-breeding forefathers so much as they increase; the speed ("Conspiracy"), the breakdowns ("Conspiracy"), and the hate-filled, paranoid lyrics (every song... including "Conspiracy") are all abundant, but done with such ferocity that it's hard to ignore, let alone lump them in with the vast quantity of shitty knock-offs that have contaminated hardcore since that Hatebreed full-length came out way back in 1997. Upon repeated listens, though, things do start to mush together, as the album runs a little long. At only 11 songs, this may seem bizarre, but songs centered around mosh riffs shouldn't fall into the four-plus minute range. That's just overall. (DH) Trustkill, 23 Farm Edge Lane, Tinton Falls, NJ 07724, trustkill.com

Forecast, the - In the Shadow of Two Gunmen, CD

Most bands, if they ever truly evolve, don't get this good in the span of a year. What the last Forecast record lacked is made up for tenfold on *In the Shadow of Two Gunmen*. Instead of sounding like a glossed-up Rainer Maria, the band has its own sound here. Mixing elements of mid-'90s post-hardcore with a little Southern rock in spots, the true treasure here are the melodic hooks. I can't emphasize enough how alive these three guys and a girl sound here. They have made a record that has power and definition and flows really well together. Other Victory bands like Hawthorne Heights and Aiden may get more attention these days, but here's a band that isn't pigeonholed for the mall emo crowd. As a matter of fact, listening to *In the Shadow of Two Gunmen*, I can't easily describe who exactly this record is for. Instead of thinking of, "14-18 male/female with turbulent emotions who doesn't realize how bad most mall emo is," I would recommend this to "Anybody who likes the flavor of post-hardcore that is not processed through a cheese factory." (EG) Victory Records, 346 North Justine, Suite 504, Chicago, IL 60607, victoryrecords.com

Frightmare - Bringing Back the Bloodshed, CD

FUCK YES. From the opening one-two riff combination, any real metal fan knows this is going to be

great. The first of those two riffs is an eerie intro which segues straight into something that wouldn't sound out of place on... *And Justice For All*, which in turn segues into another riff that wouldn't sound out of place on, uh, ... *And Justice For All*. But wait, there's more! The heart and guts of *Frightmare* is the huge debt they owe to all ugly sub-genres of the '80s: skate punk, grindcore, thrash metal, etc. The ease with which *Frightmare* can alternate between a crunchy circle-pit segment, a melodic chorus, and then a gurgled-vocal over blast beats is beyond me. Thank you, Razorback. (DH)

Razorback, razorbackrecords.com

Funerot – Invasion from the Death Dimension, CD

Without question, Funerot would be my favorite band in the world if they'd existed when I was 15. Municipal Waste is getting a lot of credit for making classic '80s thrash and crossover cool again, but they're not in a vacuum: Toxic Holocaust, Blüdwulf, and Razorback bands like *Frightmare* and Funerot have been at it for years. Like many of their labelmates, Funerot deal in B-horror and exploitation imagery, with a sci-fi twist away from slashers, zombies and cannibals towards "Phase Zero: Morbivision" and "The Man with the Megaton Mind." To go along with the budget sci-fi angle, there are touches of early Voivod's space-thrash mixed with Adrenalin OD and DRI. That's a lot of band comparisons for one review, but when a song like "Death by Draino" reminds me of Tom Araya singing for early Corrosion of Conformity, it's a better indicator of how much fun this album is than any in-depth analysis could be. (AB)

Razorback Records, PO Box 321, Farmingville NY 11738, razorbackrecords.com

Generation of Vipers – Grace, CDEP

This three-piece band from Knoxville, TN produced their debut album, *Grace*, a mammoth release of four 40-minute, epic tracks. The men of Generation of Vipers are undoubtedly talented and play their instruments well, which makes them sound like a band that is solid, serious, and dedicated. I did, however, get exhausted listening to the longest song, an 18-minute track titled "In the Crushing Fists of God," which I found boring and trite—not a leisurely listen. A person can only take so much gloomy droning metal with the occasional incomprehensible wail, and this band does not do it in small doses. It requires endurance and dedication to the stoner metal cause in order to make it through the incredibly long musical soundscapes on *Grace*. Generation of Vipers has hopped on with the wave of other bands in this genre of quasi intellectual metal (yes, intellectual metal) who are perhaps trying to achieve the same success founding forefathers Pelican, Isis, and Cult of Luna deservingly gained. *Grace* is good in practice, but not in theory. (JB)

Red Witch Recording, PO Box 781, Lenoir City, TN 37771, generationofvipers.com

Georgetown Orbits, the – My Baby's Okay, 7"

Since the genre's inception, ska revivals have seemed to pop up every 10 or so years. Assuming there's another wave set to hit soon, I'm hoping for purity as opposed to another downpour of punk infusion. Keeping me pleased by playing in the vein of the first wave, the Georgetown Orbits' take on the traditional is decently suited for mellowing backdrops,

or if you're into it, a little two stepping. The vocals are a bit weak, and the band isn't exceptional in any manner, but the 7" sedates and soothes, making for an easy couch side spin. The A-side features the title track, and the B-side features a mediocre instrumental. (BM)

Dead End Social Club

Githead – Profile, CD

Githead is the unfortunately named punk rock nursing home project featuring Colin Newman, formerly of Wire, along with a few slightly lesser known luminaries, playing what is essentially adult contemporary festival-pop, crisp as a starched polo shirt, and primed for commercial consumption. I have to admit I haven't followed Newman's post-Wire career all that closely, but it's a shame that one of the geniuses behind *Pink Flag* could ever come out with something this flat and boring. I couldn't pick a highlight from this disc even if you put a gun to my head, but I can tell you that the most disappointing find here was that the last track, "Pylons," isn't—as I had assumed—a cover of the Snowpony song, but instead, it is the only slightly interesting composition of the whole album, cut short at just over two minutes, before anything truly interesting could happen. Of course it's unfair to hold artists to the impossibly high standards that they set in their youth, but I will never forget the way songs like "Mannequin" and even the lite-rock/proto-shoegaze of "Kidney Bings" managed to turn the sugary part of my brain into complete, gleeful mush. As for Githead, I've elected to forget it as soon as I'm done writing this sentence. (JC)

Swim Records, PO Box 3459, London SW19 6ES, UK, swimhq.com

Hearst, Cary Ann – Dust and Bones, CD

With a sweet voice that sounds weathered by cigarettes and whiskey, South Carolina's Cary Ann Hearst conjures dim saloons and old Chevrolets on dirt roads, smoke filled wintry skies, and once-danced-in, empty kitchens. Throughout songs that pull from her Southern musical roots, Ms. Hearst tells stories that draw on diverse images—from religious images to scenes from the bar—in ways familiar to classical country. But from the handmade, painted skull art on her album to the thoroughly modern, indie-sounding arrangement of its songs, there's no questioning that Ms. Hearst hasn't got her ears on the past for any of her ideas. Pleading, regretful lyrics, swelling drums and blues-type guitar next to male/female vocal harmonies on tracks such as "Pocahontas" epitomize what a different and better version she's made. With its wary acoustic guitar and mournful strings, "Dresden Snow," one of the final tracks on the album, is also one of the most perfect and beautiful songs I've heard in years. Finding *Dust and Bones* might be difficult, but if you can you should. There is absolutely nothing disappointing about this album and absolutely everything to be blown away by. (AMB)

EZChief/Rebellion Road, caryannhearst.com

Hill, Zach & Mick Barr – Shred Earthship, CD

All right, I'm a rather large fan of Zach Hill and his inhuman drumming abilities. I think that most Hella releases are amazing, even if I'm not into the extreme noise direction in which they're headed. Conversely, I've never been an Orthell fan, and thus by

sound is distinctive, which is about as positive a comment to be made about any band. (BA)

Sickroom Records, PO Box 47830, Chicago, IL 60647, sickroomrecords.com



Chuck Dukowski Sextet – Eat My Life, CD

The Chuck Dukowski Sextet (CD6) is the latest brainchild of former Black Flag bassist and punk rock legend, Chuck Dukowski. Chuck also used to work for SST Records, the label his band started nearly three decades ago. As time wore on, many of the bands on that label strayed from the formula and trappings of punk and hardcore, started getting more experimental, and started putting out—for a lack of a better term—plain old rock records.

If you picked up some of his later projects, you'd be hard-pressed to believe

that these people used to play hardcore songs. That trend continues with the CD6. This music is pretty experimental and has way more in common with jazz than anything resembling punk rock. There are groovy bass lines, some horns, almost no guitar, and a really talented female singer who is a bit of a mix of Janis Joplin and Patty Smith. I'm not a fan of jazz—especially with lots of horns—but I found myself enjoying a couple songs on this (the ones light on the horns and more rock oriented), though it isn't really my cup of tea and probably won't get many repeat listens. *Eat My Life* features some guest appearances by Flea, Joe Biazia of Saccharine Trust, and some other people I've never heard of. They do lose points for the liner notes of this disc claiming how punk rock is dead, and how this is the new change in an effort to put themselves over. Whatever. It didn't seem to stop them from doing a cover of "My War" with horns in the place of the guitars. (MXV)

Nice & Friendly Records, 814 Pacific Ave, Venice, CA 90291



Clockcleaner – Nevermind, CD

This is a tough one to review. How do I even begin to review an album that's packed beginning to end with sheer amazement? Clockcleaner's *Hassler* EP completely floored me, so I was hoping for the best with this new album. Needless to say, there isn't a second of disappointment contained in these digital grooves. *Nevermind* builds upon the more straight-ahead tone of the *Hassler* EP. The songs stick to the rocking groove that the EP showcased and expand upon them. All the Yow/Albini-isms are still intact. But don't

get me wrong, there's nothing stale or stolen about this album. There is a definite influence from early Touch & Go and AmRep bands, with a little noise rock mixed in. Clockcleaner manages to pick out the best parts of all those bands and filter it into their own sound. "Interview With a Black Man" leads off the album with a drawn-out rocker. "Missing Dick" follows it with a rhythm driven dirge. "Deaf Man Talking" is the straight-up song to hold the middle of the album together. But it also leads you into the more demented second half, with songs like "NSA" which had me checking my CD player to see if it was skipping. This is as classic of a debut as the first albums from Killdozer, Jesus Lizard, or Rapeman. I feel completely comfortable in saying that *Nevermind* will be looked at as a classic of the genre 10 years from now. Check 'em out live, too. Be prepared to be blown away by loudness and strobe lights. (I would advise bringing earplugs.) Rumor has it that singer/guitarist John Sharkey took a bullet to the thigh after a recent Milwaukee show, and the band managed to make it to their show the next night in Madison. Long live Sharkey! (DA)

Reptilian Records, 403 S. Broadway, Baltimore, MD 21231 reptilianrecords.com



Coachwhips – Double Death, 2xCD

The Coachwhips are one of those groups that may attract more attention posthumously than they did while actively grinding out the process of being a band. Their final recordings, the "live" album *Peanut Butter and Jelly Live* at the *Ginger Minge* and a 2005 split with Seattle group Intelligence, were released to little fanfare, or at least the excitement that preceded and followed 2004's *Bangers vs. Fuckers* was missing. So, here we have the debris, the detritus, what the Coachwhips left behind when they called it

quits, an assortment of sonic shrapnel that puts so much of what we knew as "fast" to shame. Newcomers will find the Coachwhips' brand of scorched, blistered Death Valley blues appalling or compelling, and that's just the testosterone and gasoline overload of the arrangement. It's the production quality, or utter lack thereof, that is the true acid test, the sweetener or the repellent. Disc One of this collection is a straight run of previously unreleased tracks, few of them over a minute and a half long, which serve as good an introduction (or eulogy) as any. Check out opener "Mr. Hyde," "Prisoner 119," and "Brains Out" for examples of what I meant earlier by "scorched and blistered." The highlights here, though, are the "Roachclips" covers at the end of the disc, especially the version of the Sonics' "The Witch," the perfect mirror of sound between inspiration and end product. Disc Two is a DVD supplement of live material, most of it seemingly submitted by friends and fans. Many of the rare/unreleased tracks from Disc One appear on the videos, which is kind of a nice touch, and some of the footage of coastal college kids turned to stumbling, groping, drunken Neanderthals contrasted with the go-go, coke & formaldehyde pep of the band is just downright spooky. However, for substance alone, i.e. that quixotic formula, quality + quantity, the DVD portion is well worth the purchase price, at which point Disc One becomes a souvenir—you listened to the Coachwhips, and you survived. (JC)

Narnack Records, 381 Broadway, 4th Floor, New York, NY 10013, narnackrecords.com

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHTS

special to me. This was a band I saw at least 30 times and never got tired of. They could be a little goofy but never got to the point where they were cheeseheads. With dense melody lines and solid drumbeats as their meat and potatoes, Chomsky had a special formula that worked for this album and the one before it, *A Few Possible Selections for the Soundtrack of Your Life*. They followed *Soldiers* up with *Let's get to Second*, an album that lacked the spark of yesteryear, and (as of this writing), the band is on indefinite hiatus. Not to sound defeated, but I feel that even if the band never reforms, at least they have two fantastic documents of this spark.

I think we're gonna' make it: Feeder, *The Singles*; Death Cab for Cutie, *Plans*; Figurines, *Skeleton*; Secret Machines, *Ten Silver Drops*; Gomez, *How We Operate*.



Reviewer Spotlight: Dave Hofer (DH)

Lootpack, *Soundpieces: Da Antidote* Prior to his hip-hop saturation of the last few years with his Quasimoto, Yesterday's New Quintet, and Madvillain projects (not to mention production for MC's like Oh No and Medaphoar), west-coast beat-miner Madlib was involved with the incredibly overlooked group Lootpack. Not to say that this is Madlib's project, because that is not the case whatsoever. Along with MC Wildchild and DJ Romes, Lootpack were formed way back in 1990, affiliated with fellow-overlooked crew the Alkaholiks, but didn't release this, their debut (and only proper album) until 1999 after drawing the attention of Stones Throw founder Peanut Butter Wolf. Concentrating strictly on the key elements of hip hop (beats, lyricism, and turntablism), Lootpack released one of the strongest albums of the '90s: obscure, funky production coupled with rapid-fire, mindful lyrics and a copious amount of blunts fashioned together to spawn a head-bobbing monster. All of the MC's that appear on *Soundpieces* have similar styles, which sometimes makes it hard to pick out who's who on any given track, but seeing as how most of the album's guests are extended Stones Throw family, the similar rhyming styles helps keep the listener immersed in their stoned haze. On the surface, the album is a little stretched at 24 tracks, but a handful fall under the one-to-three minute mark, leaving plenty of room for repeated listens. Toss in a song about record shopping ("Crate Digg'n"), and you've got this music nerd hooked.

I've got CD's in my crates like crack in my pocket / yeah right, neither of the above: Nightmare, *Bringing Back the Bloodshed* (reviewed this issue); the Velvet Underground, *Loaded*; Quicksand, *Manic Compression*; Lair of the Minotaur, *Ultimate Destroyer*; Brutal Truth, *Sounds of the Animal Kingdom*.



Reviewer Spotlight: Ari Joffe (AJ)

Fudge Tunnel, *Creep Diets* I was in a pawnshop about three years ago trying to hock a broken VCR when I found this CD for three dollars. I was standing there hoping the dude would just hand me the money without actually plugging the thing in and trying it out, when I glanced at a rack of CDs and saw *Creep Diets* staring back at me. I'd been looking for any Fudge Tunnel I could get my hands on for a long time. I only had two of their songs—"Grey" on an old Columbia/Earache sampler and "Creep Diets" on a mixtape I'd gotten from some kid in junior high—and I'd listened to them obsessively for years. Back when the band was around, roughly 1990-1995, I'd foolishly neglected to purchase any of their actual albums, for one reason or another. By the time I figured out how hard their ultra-heavy, mega-groovy grunge rocked (think Killdozer + Helmet + Tad), their shit was all out of print and impossible to find. So I abandoned the broken VCR scheme (Mr. Perkwitz wasn't buying my "Dude, it works, it just needs a head cleaner" line anyway), grabbed *Creep Diets*, and high-tailed it home. I popped that sucker in my boom box with the same giddy anticipation I get when I'm about to check out some new porno, and let the 45:46 minutes of sludge seep deep into my brain. Best three bucks I ever spent! For more FT info, check out <http://loudisnotenough.co.uk/>.

God bless Evan Williams: Scott H. Biram, *Graveyard Shift* (reviewed this issue); Om, *Conference of the Birds*; Screaming Trees, *Anthology-SST Years 1985-1989*; the Byrds, *Sweetheart of the Rodeo*; Neko Case, *The Tigers Have Spoken*.



Reviewer Spotlight: Steve Kane (SK)

Morrissey, *Vauxhall and I* I'm going to take a frequently questioned stance and declare *Vauxhall and I* the best Morrissey record. It was not a swiftly made decision, but one that took years of deliberation, weighing the pros and cons of each album. Morrissey has always been associated with all things morose, but I think *Vauxhall* is the first record of his solo career that feels and sounds bleak all the way through. From the opening notes of "Now My Heart is Full" a melancholy precedent is set and continues, only stopping for the brief flash of light of "Billy Budd," the only up-tempo song on an otherwise subdued record. Lyrically, it is not much of a departure from his other records except that the sarcastic quips are kept at bay and the themes of heartache, the loss of innocence, and friendship are explored with greater intensity. The unmistakable Moz croon on tracks like "The More You Ignore Me the Closer I Get," "I am Hated for Loving," and "Hold on to Your Friends," proves that age only honed his already elegant voice. People will argue that *Viva Hate* and *Your Arsenal* are the crowning jewels of Morrissey's career, but I will forever choose the delicate and beautiful misery that is *Vauxhall and I*.

The sanest days are mad: Few and the Proud, *Stampede*; the Stone Roses, *S/T*; the Coral Sea, *Volcano and Heart*; the Hush Sound, *Like Vines*; Mirah, *You Think It's Like This But Really It's Like This*.

the transitive property not a fan of Mick Barr. It seems that this collaboration would fall more under the latter category (Orthrelm-ish), although the rhythm section is essentially the same Hill-turned-to-11 to which we've grown accustomed. Nearly every single track is a jumble of riffs and beats that are complex for complexity's sake. None of it sounds good, let alone together, and the entire release is devoid of any sense of melody or harmony. Skip it. (SJM)

5 Rue Christine, PO Box 1190, Olympia, WA 98507-1190, src.com

Holland, Jolie – *Springtime Can Kill You*, CD

The warbling, soulful voice of Jolie Holland really is mesmerizing. Her style and delivery are intimate, coming from deep inside her—from a place where her mind tells her she's singing alone rather than to a roomful of listeners. Imbued with a greater sense of vulnerability and darkness than 2004's *Escondida*, *Springtime Can Kill You* misses some of the joyousness of the aforementioned release. The songs move from slow, burning balladry to superficially sweet lullabies to invoking a funeral procession, with old-time instruments playing, moving through the streets of a small town. On this record, you can hear a subtle intensity in Holland's voice—it is more reflective, contemplative, and holds a deeper secret which will not be revealed. On such songs as "You're Not Satisfied" and "Moonshiner," Holland resurrects the past and is entrenched in it. She does not sing with such a sense of nostalgia as much as she gives the impression she's from another time and place, or rather, she wants to channel an era long forgotten. She is successful of recreating such imagery, while keeping emotional connections in place. (AJA)

Anti, 2798 Sunset Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90026, anti.com

I Farm – *IV*, CD

I Farm return with another full-length on Descendents drummer Bill Stevenson's Blasting Room Studio label. I always believed that I Farm has this amazing sound that was always overlooked, but yet somehow they manage to sell a few thousand of their CDs through heavy touring in support of punk, hardcore, and metal acts alike. They have always had this sound that complements and outshine any genre folks try to stick to them. They have been brutal with their forceful playing, catchy as all hell, slick with their metal chops, and yet so much more. This all happens while having the crap screamed out of you. Maybe this time will be their moment in the sun. Well... probably not. But, any band that has such appreciation of '80s style thrash, skate rock, punk, and so many more styles can't be that bad. I've said that a third time now, having reviewed their last few records, and I'm done. Just check them out, already. (DM)

Go-Kart Records PO Box 20 Prince Street Station New York, NY 10012 gokartrecords.com

If All Else Fails – *Don't Forget to Be Angry*, CD

It's been awhile since I've found any sort of contemporary pop-based post-punk enjoyable. Either I'm jaded to a rotten extent, or the staple days of aggression and wit with a hook are behind us. Regardless, the board short brodeo divisions and the heart-broken sobbing fashionites just don't appeal to me. Operating dangerously close to both subsets, there's something strangely likeable about If All Else Fails. Their music darts in and out of juvenile genres,

saved from uselessness among the post-pubescent crowd by the flair of their technical prowess and power. By no means are they close to breaking ground, but they're definitely a cut above the rest. After eight years in the mix, I'm sure they've seen their fair share of trend tides. With challenging worded accompaniment including a poetic assessment of the hypocrisy of Christian fundamentalism, a genuinely impassioned sound, and repeated turndowns of major label demo deals in favor of independent support, If All Else Fails puts some wisdom into an otherwise naïve scene and makes me think there's still hope and integrity to be harvested from pop-punk. Then again, they've recently contributed a track to a Sublime tribute. (BM)

Baseline Music Co, ifalleasefails.net

I'm a Truck – *S/T*, CD-R

Listening to I'm a Truck is much like watching pro-wrestling: it's easy to ask yourself amid the spandex and bad acting "What are these jokers thinking?," while your eyes remain glued to the television. This five-track CD is an eclectic and confusing mix of hip-hop, soul, synth-y sex-infused jams, and a touch of cock rock. "Spies" (the hip-hop song) contains the line "There's spies on the loose / so shake your caboose," which made me want to hang my head low in embarrassment, the same way I did when the Rock adopted and relentlessly repeated the phrase "Lay the smack down on your rudy-poo candy-ass." Catch phrases rely on repetition in order to gain popularity, but that does not mean the 15 times I'm a Truck's singer repeated this line made it any more funny or clever. Yet, despite the criticisms and wrestling metaphors made, this band would be a good time to see live, I'd bet. It's hard to ignore when wrestling comes to town, and it's hard to ignore when a band has fun with their music and has no shame rhyming the words "doobie" and "boobie." (JB)

Michael Wood 704 G Seaboard Street, Myrtle Beach, SC 29577

James Eric – *Acceptance*, CD

Chicago's James Eric plays a melancholy brand of lo-fi folk-pop in the storyteller tradition. His lyrics flow like pages of a journal and work with mixed results. Here and there, his words are the most engaging part of the song. However, many times, the lines run too long or too short to coincide with the melody and accordingly, sound stifled or rushed. The occasional tinge of electronics, strings, and piano adds a bit to the mix, but I still found myself getting bored after a handful of songs. The standout track on *Acceptance* is the excellent cover of "What Jail is Like" by the Afghan Whigs. (SK)

<http://www.myspace.com/jamesericmusic>

Joan of Arc – *The Intelligent Design of Joan of Arc*, CD

This album snuck into my CD player before I got a good look at what it was. Moments after the nearly tuneless vocals struck my ears, I said to no one in particular, "If there isn't a Kinsella in this group, there really should be." Lo and behold, it's the work of the Tim "golden god of pretension" Kinsella. *The Intelligent Design* collects the odds and ends from "rare" Joan of Arc releases, which translates to 18 tracks of unnecessary tripe better left in obscurity. His voice has a tenuous (at best) relationship with pitch; his handle on instrumentation is feeble and uninter-

esting. He's been lazily labeled an experimentalist by those unwilling to call him out on the bullshit he foists upon listeners with alarming regularity. To me, the basic appeal of Joan of Arc releases is their every-person value: structure-less rambles can be made by anyone, and boy, isn't it swell that one such nobody committed his to tape? Simply put, most of Kinsella's work (excluding Cap'n Jazz) is unlistenable, setting music's evolution back a few steps with each release. I can only hope he retires and becomes as obscure as the tracks collected on this release. (SRM)
Polyvinyl Records, PO Box 7140, Champaign, IL 61826-7140, polyvinylrecords.com

Joan of Arc - Eventually, All at Once, CD

The Chicago-area collective/Tim Kinsella pseudo-solo experiment offers up 10 tracks of textured folk ballads, knotted full-band fare and laid-back, jangly post-something vaguely in line with June of 44's *Anahata*. The group's press material and its label's website go out of their way to stress the fact that the record—all 36 minutes of it—took months to write but was recorded in five days. And rightfully so. A casual air carries the disc, which feels more like a gaggle of friends sitting in a basement hammering out familiar songs than a group cutting a plotted and precise full-length player. Accordingly, the tracks that really jump out at the listener do so as much for their interesting asides—i.e., xylophone, layered guitars or a monotone choir of sorts—as for the passion of their performance. To close it off, the group offers an emotive acoustic take on the Robert Wyatt/Kramer-penned rumination "Free Will and Testament." (JV)
Record Label, 2318 W. Thomas, #3F, Chicago, IL 60622, recordlabelrecordlabel.com

Johnny LA Rock & Mush Mouth - Hip Hop Needs Us, CDEP

This pair of MCs—Johnny LA Rock and Mush Mouth—play off of each other easily over beats that are overtly simplistic and reminiscent of early Beastie Boys material. The rhymes are uncomplicated and typically tongue-in-cheek (e.g., "Gonna drop it like a rock in a crack bus"), but the duo's vocal trade works well for them. The handful of tracks offered here is full of odd pop culture snippets, such as a *High Fidelity*-themed intro and an appearance on the third track by "Walter Crunkite." It's all very lo-fi, and they're certainly not breaking any new ground, but this release alone shows a surprising amount of promise. It will take more than an EP to prove which way this outfit will go, but the fact that they're not putting it out with any particular agenda (or ego) is refreshing. (SBM)
LA Rock Inc, johnnylarock.com

Kaada - Music for Moviebikers, CD

Norwegian soundtrack artist Kaada is best known here in the States for his pair (soon to be trio) of releases on singer-extraordinaire Mike Patton's Ipecac label, one of which was a collaboration with Patton himself. So, it should come as no surprise to those familiar with the aforementioned releases that Kaada doesn't stray too far from his form on *Music for Moviebikers*, even if this 2006 release is probably the most soundtrack-esque of the three. And while these 13 songs aren't presented on a fully symphonic scale, the nearly two dozen musicians that Kaada enlisted for the recording help him deliver a much more textured

and lavish final product. Fans of low-key, yet fully-harmonized imaginary soundtrack music would be wise to pick this one up. (SJM)
Ipecac Recordings, PO Box 1778, Orinda, CA 94563

Kayo Dot - Dowsing Anenome With Copper Tongue, CD

Kayo Dot is the brain-child of a music-school dweeb by the name of Toby Driver. That this album is an incoherent mess of high-minded ideas is likely the fault of the music school, and not necessarily that of Toby Driver. I hope so, for Toby's sake. In some circles, this is likely considered brilliant—at least John Zorn thinks so, and to some, that counts for something. And, hell, maybe this kind of stuff floats right down your stream. Maybe you're into Tzadik-endorsed musical dramatics that are the musical equivalent to, well, musicals. Maudlin musicals, at that. I, for one, am not all that impressed. I do enjoy plenty of pretentious music, but most of that falls into the category of giddy naivete, innocent grandeur—the United States of America messing around with early synthesizers at UCLA and claiming not to know a damn thing about pop music; Holger Czukay taking world music and trying to sell it to children. *Dowsing Anenome* is on the complete opposite of that spectrum—it is very "adult," in a formidable, boring way, dense in its confusion, attempting to draw floundering, jazzy conclusions that fall short of their mark at every turn. I have only so much space to dissuade you from even giving this a chance, and the aim of an honest listener should be to do exactly the opposite, to give the crap a fair shake. So, be at least forewarned, and if you see this one lying around somewhere, give it a shot. Maybe I'm just missing something, right? (JJC)
Tzadik, tzadik.com

Ladyhawk - Ladyhawk, CD

Unlike their peers with similarly stupid names (dig the formula: animal + non-animal word = rad), Ladyhawk's self-titled debut mercifully leaves the bulk of the '80s alone. Rather, the group's sound is swaddled in a discarded flannel shirt fitting of either Neil Young or Dinosaur Jr., depending on the track. Large and in charge guitar lines grumble from amplifiers, with bona fide soloing showing off the group's technical prowess. Duffy Driediger's stumbling vocals see-saw between pitches (a style that's quickly gaining prominence in indie rock), occasionally landing on excellent endpoints that bend the whole tune. The album's brusque-yet-emotional lyrics fit well into the fuzzy melancholy, even if they are rather trite. At times, the whole package is a bit slick and manufactured for my taste, like the Foo Fighters but Canadian and on Jagjaguwar. But when the '90s revival gets into full swing, watch out for Ladyhawk. New grunge bloggers are going to be too stoked. (SRM)
Jagjaguwar, 1499 West Second St., Bloomington, IN 47403, jagjaguwar.com

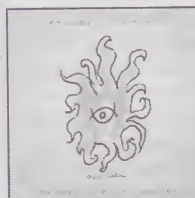
La Quiete - Tenpeun '01-'05, CD

La Quiete are an Italian band who, in their four years together, put out a small handful of split 7-inches and compilation appearances. This disc collects their entire recorded output, including some unreleased demos. The music is modern "screamo" hardcore with blasts and shrieking that tempo shifts to a



Dub Trio - New Heavy, CD

The aptly-titled Dub Trio are, well, a trio of dub rockers that have taken to sprinkling their echo-laden stoner jams with big, recurring rock riffs. Or, is it the other way around? New Heavy's opening track, "Illegal Dub," kicks off the album with a punk-rock panache, tossing a push beat and four-chord riff our way before the song's featured bass groove takes over. The guitar then mimics the bass so that the real headbanging can begin, while reverberated snare hits accompany the low end back to the first dub interlude of the album. "Not Alone," the album's only song to feature vocals (and by none other than rock icon Mike Patton), couples with "Illegal Dub" to start New Heavy with its two best songs. Patton drops some near-falsetto vocals over a very Rush's-"Tom-Sawyer"-like bass-beat combo, as random electronic noise transitions a Police-esque guitar line and Patton's uber-catchiness to make the chorus worth the price of admission by itself. An 80-second rock piece follows "Not Alone," but the album's fourth selection gives full credence to the Trio's name with a seven-plus-minute pure dub composition. Every track, in fact, features a dub sound at one point or another, even the few that are centered on punk or metal riffs. Upon repeat listens to New Heavy, it seems that the straight-up rock moments have made the large quantities of dub significantly more palatable to my non-dub-endorsing ears. Still, there are a few noticeably out-of-place sounds, specifically "Cool Out and Coexist," the album's penultimate selection that begins with 45 seconds of double bass under a moderately quirky and relatively heavy guitar line; the subsequent riff is much more befitting the pure metal treatment. In fact, a much better and more suitable beat is laid behind the initial guitar offering later in the song. But all rock/punk/metal meanderings aside, I imagine that dub fans will be really into New Heavy. The purposefully repetitious jam moments are interspersed with enough idiosyncrasies to keep me interested, and that's no easy feat. So, what the hell? Come for the dub; stay for the rock. Or is it the other way around? (SJM)
ROIR (Reach Out International Records), PO Box 501, Prince Street Station, New York, NY 10012, roir-usa.com



Johnston, Daniel - Welcome to My World, CD

The music of Daniel Johnston embodies all that is happiness and tragedy at the same time. Johnston is able to effortlessly regress to childhood, and he sings about the important things in life you learn for the first time—love, expression, freedom, sadness, and death—things that get hazier and less clear as the years pass. Due in part to his own mental illness, Johnston was able to create a world of his own, where he was free to express himself, his thoughts, and his desires without being influenced by the reactions of others. *Welcome to My World* is a collection of his greatest hits. Songs like "Walking the Cow" and "Speeding Motorcycle" show Johnston's gift for writing simple, catchy, happy melodies. Like children's stories come to life, the songs are carried by Johnston's singing, nasal and strained, but delivered with conviction and sincerity. His songs and persona are honest and without pretense or any sense of ego. Also, the simplicity of his melodies are universal, and while his subject matter itself appears just as juvenile—walking cows and speeding motorcycles—some of Johnston's songs are based on hallucinations brought on by his mental illness. It is this dichotomy that makes his character and music so interesting; his art is both happy and sad. Likewise, his ballads present a contradiction in their seriousness and the absurdity of Johnston's delivery. While he bears his soul, laying out his lover for the world to see ("Laurie"), you can't help but smile at his awkward delivery. It isn't a mean-spirited laugh, but an acknowledgement of our failings when it comes to relationships with other people, especially lovers. While the listener is able to discern the light-hearted from the weightier fair, every song seems just as meaningful and potent to Johnston. They are all tied to him very deeply, and he reveals that connection in their every performance. (AJA)
hithowareyou.com



Mr. Lif - Mo' Mega, CD

For the past few years, Def Jux has had me worried. Seriously... SA Smash? C-Rays Walz? Thank god for Mr. Lif. Easily the best MC on the label, Lif has yet to disappoint after a few excellent EPs (*Enters the Colossus*, *Emergency Rations*) and an amazing debut full-length (*I, Phantom*). An admitted student of the smooth-as-butter flow made famous by Rakim and fellow-Bostonian Guru, Mr. Lif flows easily from line to line, forcing the listener to actually pay attention beyond how fresh the beat is or whatever. Speaking of beats, Def Jux label head El-P handles most of the production on *Mo' Mega*, save for "Murs Iz My Manager" (Edan), "Washitup" (Mr. Lif), and "For You" (freelance DJ Nick Toth). While Edan's beat is incredibly funky with its one backwards snare hit, Lif's beat takes a deep-bass Reggaeton vibe, and Toth's sounds like a weird combination of Jay-Z's "Girls, Girls, Girls" and Bump J's "Move Around." El-P's beats are refreshingly boom-bap. Relying less on the noisy, post-apocalyptic drone that helped him make his name, El-Producto's focus on *Mo' Mega* is on the bass and snare drum interaction, which comes across much more refreshingly than the beats he seems to have been phoning in since *Fantastic Damage* back in 2002. While *I, Phantom* was a concept album following a character from birth to the end of his life and the world (whoa), *Mo' Mega* is less ambitious

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHTS



Reviewer Spotlight: Chay Lawrence (CL)

Christian Death, *Only Theatre of Pain*. Like me, you probably have an extensive list of great tracks that you'd include on mixtapes if their lyrical content was less offensive. Don't ask me why, but I'm uncharacteristically sensitive about hurting people's feelings with my mixtastical gifts. Such is the case with a couple of the tracks from Christian Death's debut album *Only Theatre of Pain*. Seriously, "Romeo's Distress" is one of the finest songs of the death rock movement, but it's entirely ruined by the first line. Along with 45 Grave, Christian Death spearheaded the LA death rock movement on this side of the pond while Bauhaus and Siouxsie & the Banshees were busy doing the same on the other, all shaping what would eventually become gothic rock. Singer Rozz Williams' blended surrealism, EC Comics horror, and downright provocation into his lyrics, in an effort to make sure no one was left un-offended. Mercifully, the execution prevents the songs from degenerating into adolescent shock-fests, thanks to some fine guitar/bass interplay. Ex-Adolescent Rikk Agnew's muscular riffs keep the songs on the borderline somewhere between Circle Jerks and Bauhaus, and coming from a band usually labeled as "gothic," tracks like "Spiritual Cramp" and "Cavity - First Communion" sound dangerously close to fist-pumping punk anthems. While it's common knowledge that the comedy-act carrying the Christian Death moniker since 1985 has absolutely nothing to do with the band that recorded *Only Theatre of Pain*, it's intriguing to think what could have been if the death rock movement hadn't largely fizzled-out with the passing of Christian Death, Gun Club, and 45 Grave.

Lithia Sabbat Sounds: Scott Walker, *The Drift*; Keep of Kalessin, *Armada*; Of the Wand and the Moon, *Sonnenheim*; Sir Richard Bishop, *Fingering the Devil*; Gorgoroth, *Ad Majorem Sathanas Gloriam*.



Reviewer Spotlight: Ryan Leach (RL)

Soft Boys, *the, Underwater Moonlight*. I'm supposed to describe how awesome this record is. That's what *Punk Planet* doesn't pay me for. Instead of just going on and on about what this record sounds like (a la *All Music Guide*), I'm going to tell you how much this record means to me, personally: 1) I put it here, in writing, that I love this record more than my mother. 2) If I had to go to a Saigon whorehouse and was allowed to bring only 10 records, this would be one of them. 3) Once I caught gonorrhea from said whorehouse, I would refrain from using this record to fan my unit. 4) I would forego (and have foregone) much needed dental care to buy numerous copies of this record. 5) This record is probably the best synthesis of the Byrds' '60s folk-rock with the mid-tempo punk rock of the Sex Pistols. Couple that with a singer (Robyn Hitchcock) who packs wit like a minor Henry Miller, and you have what I call one of the best punk rock records of the early '80s. I'd eat McDonalds every day for a year to have experienced a Soft Boys concert while they were still in their prime. So, in dosing, this record means more than anything in my life (with a few exceptions).

Favorite albums at the moment: The new Barbara Streisand with a Bee Gee record; Deion Sanders, *Prime Time*; Miss Alex White and the Red Orchestra, *S/T* (reviewed this issue at punkplanet.com); the Gun Club, *Miami*; Mariah Carey, the Christmas Album.



Reviewer Spotlight: Justin Marciniak (JM)

Scott Walker, *Boy Child*. Like Bing Crosby and Andy Williams, Scott Walker croons. Unlike Bing and Andy, though, Scott is not known for singing Christmas songs. If he did sing Christmas songs, he'd probably sing about Santa Claus' nonexistence, Frosty the Snowman composed of yellow snow and melting into a puddle, or drinking scotch alone in front of a dying fire on Christmas Eve. Sure, jingle bells and cheery fa-la-la vocals would fill the music, but the lyrics would not be jolly. On *Boy Child*, a compilation of tracks from Walker's solo golden age between 1967 and 1970, the singer croons over orchestral pop with strings, horns, choirs, jazzy piano, harpsichord, symphonic percussion, Spanish guitar, electric guitar feedback, and more. But, as in Elliott Smith's songs, the music's beauty contradicts the ugliness of the lyrics. Walker's words can slightly resemble a Bukowski poem or Vonnegut story. He sets his songs in the dystopia of the Clash's *London Calling* or even Gang of Four's *Entertainment!* In "Little Things (That Keep Us Together)," he sings of a neighbor's suicide and a plane crash. Or, his lyrics can be absurd and darkly comic. Over jazzy nightclub piano in "Time Operator," Walker sings from the perspective of a modern hermit who paid only his telephone bill so he can try to converse with the operator who continuously tells the official time over the telephone. Think of Walker as a bizarre Burt Bacharach who couldn't care less about what the world needs now.

Beating my brains: Neil Young, *Living with War*; Jens Lekman, *Oh You're So Silent*; Jens; Gnarl Barkley, *St. Elsewhere*; Pulp, *This Is Hardcore*; Iggy Pop, *Lust for Life*.



Reviewer spotlight: Steve Mizek (SRM)

Stiff Little Fingers, *Inflammable Material*. Stiff Little Fingers' debut album, *Inflammable Material*, hits like a wounded dinosaur: gigantically fierce. Still waving the "fuck you" flag two years after punk first planted it in the public eye (for sale), the group's fiery attitude and anthem-ready melodies and lyrics made a lot of punk groups look like small potatoes. Led by the menacing scowl of Jake Burns and flanked by seething and aggressive guitar

slower, more manageable pace that tends to bring out the feeling in the music. This style of music was done best by bands like Pageninety-nine, Orchid, and Saetia. La Quiete sing in Italian, but if you are anything like me, you can't understand the lyrics to the American bands that play this style of music without a lyric sheet. (MXV)

The Perpetual Motion Machine, PO Box 657, Hamilton, VA 20159, theperpetualmotionmachine.com

Legendary Stardust Cowboy, *the/The Western Dark - Split, 7"*

Legendary Stardust Cowboy is some country band that features Klaus Flouride of the Dead Kennedys. I'm in no way a fan of country music; in fact, it is easily the genre of music I most despise, so needless to say that even a tie-in to a legendary punk rock band can't save them for me. The Western Dark side reminds me a lot of something you'd expect from the Butthole Surfers sort of when they were in that 'tween state between the greatness they had and the suck they became. It isn't bad, but then again, you have no real urge to keep listening to it either. (MXV)

Classic Bar Music, no contact information provided

Lennon, Don - *Routine, CD*

Don Lennon (doesn't seem like the name of a young whippersnapper, does it?) carries with him a musical deadpan that is equivalent to Steven Wright's comedic version of the straight man expression. He writes and plays songs about Jimmy Fallon cracking his shit up on Saturday Night Live and a dance called the Trust Fund—all set to perfect pop arrangements of windy keyboard settings, acoustic guitars, and a voice that's as soft as a puppy dog's hide. *Routine* is the Boston-born Lennon's fourth full-length and his first since his 2002 *Secretly Canadian* release. It just so happens that *Secretly Canadian* is also the current home of Jens Lekman, a peer who sings quirky tunes about his heart breaking. Lennon sings the same sorts of songs, but about John Ritter and Henry Winkler, not his boring ol' heart. If you happen to be one of the few people who love the work of Carrot Top, one listen of "Last Comic Standing" and you might be singing another tune. Lennon makes a good point. The pratfalls lower expectations, but the schtick Lennon takes with his own work is not a schtick at all. Well... it's at least a good one. He's not resorting to props like the Redneck Cell Phone for laughs. (SM)

donlennon.com

Lewis, Jenny & the Watson Twins - *Rabbit Fur Coat, CD*

With the current alt-country scene being completely oversaturated, I was a little skeptical about this release, and maybe that's why I was so taken aback by how damn good it is. Headed by Rilo Kiley's Jenny Lewis, *Rabbit Fur Coat* is a traditional country album—sad sounding songs about broken hearts and broken lives—but from the start, it's obvious that Lewis is not jumping on a bandwagon and copying a style... she was born to do this. Her gift clearly lies with her warm, rich voice, which molds and shapes each song of fluttering, twangy strumming. Over the course of the album, she manages to sound young, naïve, wise and old, never missing a step and never overdoing it. To hear the proof for yourself, check out "The Big

Guns," "Happy," and "You Are What You Love," on the Team Love website. Once you get a taste, you'll be hooked. In *Rabbit Fur Coat*, Lewis has a great debut album, and if she can keep it up, will easily carry the torch for country women like Loretta Lynn and Connie Francis. Those may be big shoes to fill, but if this in any indication, Lewis has what it takes. (MP)

Team Love, 151 1st Ave. #115, New York, NY 10003, www.team-love.com

Lind, Mark - *Death or Jail, CD*

This compact disc is a hodgepodge of the worst shit imaginable, like really watered down Joe Strummer Clash with the worst of the worst '80s Regan-era renegades (AKA: the Boss). My favorite part of his bio sheet follows: "Lind is a poet and philosopher of the human condition cut from the same cloth as Bruce Springsteen, Bob Dylan, and Paul Westerberg." Applying that logic, I'm (Ryan Leach) cut from the same cloth as Mike Tyson, Muhammad Ali, and Jack Dempsey. I mean, I own a pair of boxing gloves and can throw a right hook, correct? Bullshit. (RL)

Sailor's Grave Records, PO Box 6786 Toledo, OH 43612, sailors-graverecords.com

Lot Six, *the - The Lot Six Get Baked on Youth Culture, LP*

Boston's the Lot Six have accomplished something special with this red vinyl album and it's Harvey Pekar/"Do They Know It's Halloween?" cartoonish cover art. One moment this hardened, seven-year-old five-piece is throwing a spazz-out at the walls and the ceiling, and then the come back with a slower, stonier song like "Ho Hum (Ho Hum)." All over these eight songs (the ninth is an instrumental outro) are the diabolical inferences of inspiration that worked their ways into these livewires and sent their heads in different directions. Dave Vicini explores thoughts of self pain and references body parts to great effect in his lyrics. He also comes off on record like a live and liquored Foo Fighter named Grohl. His deft writing skills are never overshadowed by the occasionally frantic force of the rest of the band. Everything sits properly in place and moderation, allowing for balanced appreciation. Get *Baked on Youth Culture* is the epitome of the adage, "Everyone sits, everyone sees." It's ideal as lines like, "You count your eggs when you're in hell"—from "Bury Your Eyes"—aren't lost in a hailstorm pelting. (SM)

Plastic Records, PO Box 1385, New York, NY 10156, plasticrecords@hotmail.com

Lovesick - *Discography, CD*

This discography is not a complete collection due to it missing the first demo (all songs have been re-released from it) and Lovesick's final and only CD released just before their demise. This is one of those bands that you always saw for sale at the indie record distro kid at hall shows. I always knew these guys had fans but they never really got too huge. They kind of had that post-punk sound that was reminiscent of Superchunk but always tried to push them further than just pop songs. They were in it for the art of heartfelt music that connected to the awkward and skinny kids with big glasses. All kidding aside, this band gave it their all in a way that will always go unappreciated. Possibly it's due to how jangly they played or the off-key vocals. But isn't that what made Cap'n Jazz so great? Even though it is easy

to slam these guys, I can say I'm a fan of this band that helped make emo great before it became a dirty, dirty word. But if anyone is teaching Emo 101, there should definitely be mention of these guys. (DM)
 Harlan Records, 7205 Geronimo NLR, AR 72116 seemybrother-dance.com

Magas - May I Meet My Accuser, CD

After a few listens, *May I Meet My Accuser* is pretty hilarious. Dense electric death disco out of Chicago, Magas has crafted an intense, nihilistic no-wave trash dance to covet the second release spot in his brief canon. The album is faux-angry, full of riffed-out electronics to pave the way for Magas' brazen vocal stylings. Perhaps to counter the stiff, robotic mood of the music, the vocals are all over the mark, either half growling or all shouts, as evinced on "Chicagocide." The track "I Need Love" offers a remote variation, with the music bubbling along while Magas stays monotone in a delivery reminiscent of Right Said Fred gone creepy, repeating "I need love / dungeons in my mind / I need love." The point, it seems, is to simultaneously annoy and entertain, which Magas pulls off quite well. By the time "Walk Through the Dark" comes around, you will likely be shaking your head, wondering why you didn't realize it before. It certainly isn't anything to rave about, but it is a pretty sneaky trick. (SBM)
 Imaginary Conflict, 6250 N. Oakley #2, Chicago, IL 60659, imaginaryconflict.com

Magicyclops - Best of Synthesizer Hits, CD

If you believe this album's booklet, Mr. Cyclops has been a public dumbass since 1986. Championing the noble cause of ironically liking dirt cheap beer, NAS-CAR, unicorns, and Hulk Hogan, this self-proclaimed "cult comedian" is the embodiment of why people hate hipsters. Magicyclops' music is less offensive than his persona, pulled from the limited palate of a single keyboard. *Best of Synthesizer Hits* collects 16 songs, most clocking in at less than two minutes, and each less exciting than the one preceding it. This guy finds a right-hand rhythm then a left-hand rhythm and repeats it until even he can't stand it anymore. Occasionally he'll sprinkle some morose vocals on top, which add nothing of value to the mix. While other novelty acts have some compelling facet to earn an audience, Magicyclops is just some lazy bastard who likes to pick fights and be obnoxious. Total and utter shit sandwich. (SRM)
 Global Popstar, globalpopstar.com

Malachi Constant - Pride, CD

Malachi Constant is a foursome from Saint Paul that is trying very hard. Like a locust struggling to escape its ground-dwelling shell, the group is in a state of to-be-continued flux. Once a straight-up guitar rock band with plainly-stated Sonic Youth and Trans Am influences, Malachi Constant is now becoming more comfortable with settling down the guitar—briefly. The end result, *Pride*, is something that sounds roughly like Pinback or the Unicorns, except with fewer (and shittier, when they appear) beats. Amazingly, I think the uncanny similarity is unintentional. The guitars flit back and forth between serene clean tone and big bear fuzzy, trading off with the double tracked calm vocals for the spotlight. In fact, it's almost a rare thing when the vocals and guitars overlap, suggesting a de-

sire for emphasis. The 12 songs on *Pride* are enjoyable, even if they walk a well-established path. Pinback fans waiting for the group's next release might want to whet their appetites by giving this a try. (SRM)
 Guilt Ridden Pop, PO Box 11894, Saint Paul, MN, 55111 guiltriddenpop.com

Meat Purveyors, the - Someday Soon Things Will be Much Worse, CD

I really liked the Meat Purveyors last album, 2004's *Pain by Numbers*, a whole lot, and I like this new one too, for the most part. They're a four-piece band that uses traditional bluegrass instrumentation (guitar, mandolin, string bass) to play a mix of fast cow punk and slow, sad love songs. The strongest aspect of their sound comes from the perfectly matched harmonies of vocalists Jo Stanli Watson and Cherylyn Diamond. Tunes like "I Got Wise," "Look on Your Face," and "Burr Under My Saddle" make the best use of the ladies' talent and showcase their lyrical wit and biting sense of humor. But things get a tad too ironic for my tastes when it comes to the band's choice of covers. Their version of Loretta Lynn's "Fist City" makes perfect sense, but "Don't You Want Me Baby" and "Hot Blooded"? Those songs suck ass, no matter how they're played or who's playing them. Their inclusion on the disc really kills the momentum of an otherwise solid album. So, I'd steer newbies towards the slightly superior *Pain by Numbers*. If you really like that one, then check out this new one. (AJ)
 Bloodshot Records, 3039 W Irving Park Rd., Chicago, IL 60618, bloodshotrecords.com

Melchior, Dan - Fire Breathing Clones on Cellular Phones, CD

Fire Breathing Clones on Cellular Phones is less experimental than Melchior's last record, *Hello, I'm Dan Melchior*, which works in his (and our) favor. Throwing some of the more obscure elements to the wind, Melchior's conglomeration of styles—from conga to '60s mod-rock—meld together effortlessly on about half the tracks, which is not to say the album has gone completely mainstream. The lyrics are surrealistically woven and rhythms incongruous from song to song. However, the kookier elements are better assimilated here and don't overshadow the music. As well, the songwriting is tamed down and melodies more upbeat. These cheery (for lack of a better word) pop songs work best, with Melchior really showboating his British accent on a few. Despite the high points, the album does lose steam about halfway through; each track blends together and starts sounding way similar. Overall, there are more than a couple good songs to make this release a worthwhile listen. (AJA)
 Plastic Records, PO Box 1385, New York, NY 10156, danmelchior.com

Melvins - Houdini Live 2005: a Live History of Gluttony and Lust, CD

Only the Melvins! One of the most innovative (and longest running) bands mining and reworking the tired old horse of hard/heavy rock music reinvents the reissue record (this review brought to you by the letters R and E). After being commissioned to play their landmark *Houdini* album for an All Tomorrow's Parties festival, the band decided to record the album live. It's one of (if not the) best-known and appreciated Melvins albums, likely due to the fact that it's their most accessible and digestible. In reimagining

in scope, but doesn't skimp on the lyrical prowess whatsoever. Though still political in nature, Lif seems to have gotten some of that out of his system with the 2005 *Perceptionists* album, as a handful of the songs on *Mo' Mega* are slightly lighter in tone. This doesn't mean they're any less smart, though. "Washitup" slams bad hygiene, "Long Distance" is a surprisingly graphic account of a sexual encounter with a seldom-seen lover, and "Murs Iz My Manager" features Murs (duh) as Lif's manager (double duh) in a comical track that claims Mr. Lif "put Kanye up to sayin' all that." There are some conscious-heavy songs, though, like "Brothaz" (that, in regards to the Bush administration, says "fuck 'em"), but in the end, *Mo' Mega* does exactly what it needs to: it doesn't overstay its welcome, and it provides memorable production with outstanding lyricism to create an excellent album. (DH)
 Definitive Jux, definitivejux.net



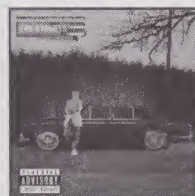
New York Dolls - One Day It Will Please us to Remember Even This, CD

The New York Dolls were one of the most inspirational bands in history in many people's eyes. They helped influence the punk rock that would come right after them, and they even influenced the glam-metal that would follow a decade after their demise. They went at full speed and crashed and burned after only a couple of albums, but made such an impact that their mark is still being felt three decades later. I hold them in such high regard, that when the two surviving members of the band decided to "reform" the band, the first question I ask is, "Why? And how can you do this when 3/5 of your band are sadly deceased?" Sure, they'll tell you that they played together and had so much fun that they decided to keep it at it, and that may or may not be true, but to call this the New York Dolls somehow seems a little less than authentic. There are 13 tracks on this album, and it really does have a similar flavor as the old Dolls' material in many cases—pretty enjoyable, though not quite as raunchy or with as much punch as the old band. It really feels more like a New York Dolls-inspired band rather than the real thing. I just can't get over the fact that 3/5 of the band is gone, and the two left are somehow trying to recreate something that can't be recreated. Had they called this band anything else, I think it would have not had an impact on my expectations or have given me a biased opinion of what it should be, nor would it feel like this was just a gimmick to try and make some extra cash. If you can get past that, the music on here isn't bad at all. (MXV)
 Roadrunner Records, roadrunnerrecords.com



Serena-Maneesh - S/T, CD

So, every review I've read about Serena Maneesh thus far has been pretentious rambling full of fanciful, ethereal imagery to describe their music in colors and emotions. (I take all that to mean that the music is boring enough for the mind to wander to more interesting places.) I'm here now to cut through the crap and tell you what it sounds like. The opening single, "Drain Cosmetics," begins with a hook I've heard before (Clinic?), and continues with noisy guitars and breathy vocals that rest on that prize, pilfered melody. It's a catchy start, but don't let that fool you that the rest of the album follows suit. They try My Bloody Valentine/Jesus and Mary Chain atmospherics mixed with feedback and airy vocals that float over distortion. Melody lurks in the background of all the commotion, and the best parts occur when it comes to the forefront and the guitarists play with it. Oftentimes, the songs are based around riffs repeated ad nauseam while other bandmates solo or jam. This technique begs the question: how many times can a band repeat a bass line and noodle before I lose interest? The musicianship is impressive, but the songwriting isn't necessarily so. Psychedelics have been done better, folks. "Un-Deaux" gives a glimpse of how good the rest could be if excess was stripped away and melodies were allowed to develop; "Her Name is Suicide" is reminiscent of the Cardigans after they got boring; "Sapphire Eyes" is great pop that ends in truly annoying noise; "Don't Come Down Here" begins like an Air song and digresses to metal riffs and blather until it transitions back to light acoustics; and the finale is 12 impressive minutes of shredding, world-swallowing distortion. In the end, it's interesting, illogical, and sometimes boring. Maybe I don't have the patience to be a child of the psychedelic era, but thankfully, we can always count on punk to cut through the crap. (KG)
 Playlouderrecords/Beggars Group, 625 Broadway, 12th Floor, New York, NY 10012, playlouder.com, beggars.com/us



Streets, the - The Hardest Way to Make an Easy Living, CD

First, Mike Skinner, AKA the Streets, was a geezer. Then he was a geezer with girl problems and missing money. Now, Mike Skinner is a geezer in the spotlight who's having trouble dealing with the fame, fortune, and everything that comes along with it. Normally, the whining of the rich and famous is irritating, but Skinner does it with such flair and humor, it's hard to not sympathize. On his third release, Skinner continues in highly effective talk-sing style; it's not quite rap like we're used to, but it's definitely not singing. He delivers his stories of crack-smoking pop stars, overindulgence, and lack of privacy over typical dance beats that halt and jerk, matching his flow each step of the way. Unlike most rap albums today where it's all about the hot beats, for Skinner, the beats are the backdrop for his quirky lyrical musings, and

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHTS

lines, the Irish quartet's blistering sound made the Sex Pistols look like the Water Pistols in comparison. Songs like "Suspect Device," "Wasted Life," "Alternative Ulster," and "Rough Trade" were gritty enough to be plucked from the gutter (particularly with their hole in the wall production), but so well-written that it was difficult to find a chink in their natty armor. Growing up in Northern Ireland gave the group a unique bitterness on top of being timely pissed youth. Admittedly, Stiff Little Fingers were not as stylistically flexible or well-equipped as their contemporaries in the Clash. And yet, songs like the superb and cheeky punk ballad "Barb Wire Love," and the cover of "Johnny Was," show the group willing to play outside their angst-filled comfort zone. Though later albums would be watered down, Stiff Little Fingers' striking debut is a bona fide punk rock classic.

Records seeing spins: Captain Beefheart, *Trout Mask Replica*; Dinosaur Jr., *You're Living All Over Me*; Steve Reich & the Ensemble Modern, *Music for 18 Musicians*; Descendents, *Milo Goes to College*; TI, *King*.



Reviewer Spotlight: Sarah Moody (SBM)

Carissa's Wierd, Ugly But Honest. Moving from Arizona to Seattle, Carissa's Wierd settled in to release three proper full-lengths before calling it quits in 2003, and *Ugly But Honest* was their first. *Ugly* is full of hazy, lo-fi basement recordings that explore the depths of quiet longing while retaining reassuring warmth. It is an intimate portrait throughout, painted with half daydreams and tainted memories, as exemplified by heartbreaker "A Bathlike Green." Continually understated while remaining intricate, most songs deal with a certain night, person, or moment, as filtered through the memory of Mat Brooke and Jenn Ghetto, the primary songwriters of the group. Measured and emotional are the hallmarks of these indie ballads—as brooding as they are uplifting. Carissa's Wierd specialized in finding that blurred ground in between the two. Brooke and Ghetto's hushed, breathy vocals come across as though through radio signals, everything scratchy and softened, constantly playing off one another. Taking the ordinary struggles of airport lounges, fluorescent lights, lost holidays, and old acquaintances forgotten, Carissa's Wierd tackles it all with an intensity and grace that has yet to be matched. They likely never received the level of recognition they deserved, but the band might be the better for it.

Drifting, drifting: V/A, *The Funhouse Comp Thing* (reviewed this issue); Ellen Allien & Apparat, *Orchestra of Bubbles*; Dead Moon, *Echoes of the Past*; Lovers, *Star Lit Sunken Ship*; and every single Elliott Smith record.



Reviewer Spotlight: Scott J. Morrow (SJM)

Ben Folds, *Fear of Pop, Volume I*. Ah, the funk-out world of Ben Folds. And what a world it is! For those not "in the know," *Fear of Pop, Volume I*, was Folds' 1998 irreverent foray into a world of critics-be-damned good times. The unabashedly fun disc of mostly instrumental, '70s-inspired, Moog-grooving deliciousness runs the gamut from super catchiness to downright silliness. The album's overture and title track lays said Moog on top of the pseudo-ambiance of rock toms, background whispers, and the bass line, which sets the song's melody, before bringing that bass back all huge and distorted. Folds' spoken-word vocals descend into screams over that thick-ass bass and a set of crooning "woos," and the backdrop for *Volume I*'s harmonious ways is set.

"Kops," the succeeding track, takes us on the aural escape of some dude feeling 5-0 through a funky '70s soundscape. "In Love," a hilarious and Shatneresque story of unrequited love, disgorges a nugget of truth from the one-time Enterprise captain that undoubtedly has been echoed in the thoughts of numerous males across the planet: "You're right, I can't commit . . . to you!" The laughs continue to be scattered about the hum-able melodies, too, as Folds later proclaims, "I paid my money / and I'm going to see all the movie // I'll not be screwed / I'll not be screwed like the people leaving early!" Rumor has it that a long-awaited sequel could be emerging in the near future under the title *Volume III*. I'll be waiting.

At puberty, I was sworn to secrecy by the International Brotherhood of Lying, Fickle Males: Luis Bacalov, *The Italian Westerns*; of the Black Heart Procession, *The Spell* (reviewed this issue); Don Caballero, *World Class Listening Problem*; Dysrhythmia, *Barriers and Passages*; Mr. Lif, *Mo' Mega* (reviewed this issue).



Reviewer Spotlight: (Mr.) Dana Morse (DM)

Soul Asylum, *And the Horse They Rode In On*. I've always had a soft spot for these guys—until they got on that "Runaway Train" sappiness that also helped them get as big as they did. But, in my opinion, if you're in the business of writing catchy tunes, you have a moment of genius before overexposure. This release was it before their undoing into greatness, leaving their earlier fans behind. And *the Horse They Rode In On* definitely wasn't their grittiest release but probably Soul Asylum's best songwriting before unloading their roots. There are moments of greatness that fans of Replacements and early Lemonheads would agree upon. Here are the best of bar room songs ("Veil of Tears"), rockers ("Easy Street"), and quirky songs that glue it all together ("Gullible's Travels"). Sure, this record is easy to swallow, but sometimes that's just what we need.

What Rocks My Socks Lately: BellRays, *Have a Little Faith*; Mastodon, *Leviathan*; Retisonic, *Levittown*; Ui, *Answers*; anything by Ned's Atomic Dustbin (welcome back!).

the record live, the band mixes up the tracklist a bit and reworks a few of the songs. The results give new life to a 13-year-old classic. It's part of the Melvins genius that they could pull off a project like this while also making the record a substantial piece of work in its own right. (RR)

Ipecac Recordings, 356 Bowery, #2, New York, NY 10012, ipecac.com

Memphis Morticians, the – Greetings From the Memphis Mortuary, 7"

All you greasers and Fonzie lookin' motherfuckers listen up! The Memphis Morticians are a rock 'n' roll band that you must check out! They offer up three tunes on this 7". Side A contains two burning rockabilly romps that sound as dangerous as anything I've heard coming out of the genre lately. They totally work that retro '50s delinquent vibe to the core. I'll bet you money that even if they've never used them, the Morticians own switchblades. And they've probably had sex with Tijuana hookers. The real kicker is the B-side entitled "Whistle and I'll Come to You My Lad." This creepy little ballad mixes that lonesome, weary sound of soul singers like Otis Redding with an excellent chord progression that resembles the Stooges' "Sick of You." This is a record you must own. (AJ)

Space Hearse Records, memphismorticians.net

Miranda Sound – Western Reserve, CD

Why did that tried and true indie rock—that of the Promise Ring, Juno, the Dismemberment Plan, etc.—get all old-fashioned and ignorable in this world? Miranda Sound lead singer Billy Peake sings, "I know I've grown cold with age," on "Take It Where You Can Get It," and both the line and the song title could serve as an explanation of gradually thinning audiences for the music that spawned a band like Death Cab for Cutie. It sucks that there's no more Knapsack. Am I wrong? Why did we stop supporting that emotional, heart-on-the-sleeve music? Were we still favorable to it in the same way, Columbus, Ohio's Miranda Sound's new album would be a chart-topper or at least giving Panic! at the Disco a serious run for their money. The record—produced by fucking emo mogul J Robbins—and the band's third since 2001, is nowhere near being rote. Its experimental usage of strings and challenges to structure make *Western Reserve* a very viable record, even if it might fall on deaf ears. (SM)

mirandasound.com

Misery Index – Discordia, CD

With the exception of a few bands, crusty hardcore sucks. Crusty hardcore played by pretty clean-looking metal dudes from Baltimore, however, is awesome. Misery Index's political approach to grinding, thrash-y hardcore is unquestionable in its ability to get your attention, and with *Discordia*, they haven't compromised anything. By keeping each song just as long as it needs to be and filling each one with skilled (but not off-putting) musicianship, this quartet continues to be more annihilating than pretentious. The result is just as catchy as it is aggressive—something few bands can achieve and even fewer can make engaging. While the production is slightly muddy, it just makes *Discordia* sound that much more authentic, as overly polished hardcore and metal records tend to sound strained. Grinding and circle-pitting through the 10 songs on this album only takes 33 minutes,

leaving my speakers jarringly silent when the album abruptly ends, but after the malicious (and thought-provoking) whirlwind that is *Discordia*, Misery Index deserve the physical and mental rest. (DH)

Relapse, PO Box 2060, Upper Darby, PA 19082, relapse.com

Mister Vague – File Under: Trial, CD

Billed as "Reno's Aggressive Acoustic Hitmakers," Mister Vague vaguely make any of the claim valid. The trio is from Reno, and lead singer Mark Earnest does play an acoustic guitar, but if you want to hear aggression on one of those things, you're better off trying a Mountain Goats album or two and John Darnielle will give a tutorial. There's more mellowness than anything on this album, treading consistently as it does in the lukewarm waters of adequacy (if that). Despite being from a city that's a gambler's playground, Mister Vague refuse to take any risks, instead just playing the penny slots in the kiddie casino. (SM)

mistervaguemusic.com, mistervague1@sbcglobal.net

Model/Actress – S/T, CDEP

According to the one-sheet, Model/Actress "would be the best band in the world if it weren't for the world," which just plain isn't true. Loud guitars fly over rudimentary keyboard elements, while bass lines lurch forward like they're still daydreaming of the grunge days—especially on "Wait, What?," which sounds like an unintentional tribute to the Butthole Surfers. Most tracks move along like early-'90s rock radio songs that came too late, but it's when lead Todd Phillips really starts shouting (such as on "Equestrian") that the album shows promise. Former Jesus Lizard frontman David Yow takes over vocals on "The Nodder," but as you may have already guessed, it doesn't live up to what he did with that band. (SBM)

No contact information provided.

Molecules – 23 Factory Slaves, CD

When I was 16, my friend Leah and I called Don Bolles on the telephone. She got his phone number from Metallica's biggest fan who was living with Don Bolles at the time, strangely enough. Hell, they may still be living together as far as I know. Anyway, we were 16 and dumb and thought the Germs were pretty cool, so we called Don Bolles. All I remember is talk of flamingo pornography, the rats in Don's apartment, and that's about it. So the single page of handy dandy notes that came with my handy dandy Molecules compact disc said that Don Bolles was once in the band. That's cool, I guess. He was probably the oldest one. He probably had the lowest maturity level, too. He's not in the band anymore. Some dudes from the Warlocks played on this album, though. That's all I really have to say about that. (MF)

Self-released, myspace.com/molecules

Mountain High – S/T, 7"

Ah, man, this 7" almost has it! Seriously! There's just one piece of the puzzle missing. I mean, the thing starts off pretty rad with piss take T-Rex and Johnny Thunders "riffing," but loses focus and ideas shortly thereafter. I mean, I guess stuff like a good bridge would help the first song on this album. Instead, it just drags and fucking refuses to stop. Bummer, 'cause I thought this bad boy might have some Mummies-like potential. The fucking thing has hints of that certain lo-fi genius I love. Maybe next time,

guys. Oh, well. The trade-in on this will get me some King Cobra at least. (RL)

Hot Dog City Records, PO Box 63962, Philadelphia, PA 19147

Neil on Impression - The Perfect Tango, CDEP

The Perfect Tango contains four tracks and about 35 minutes of dramatic, unpretentious instrumental rock. The first few minutes of the first track, "Stars Paint the Forest Gold," swell with guitar and piano but also sway with strings and trumpets. After a few peaks and valleys, the song gradually climaxes like the end of Maurice Ravel's "Boléro." Comparing Italy's Neil on Impression to Iceland's Sigur Rós is tempting. Although they do not play brief pop songs, Neil on Impression does play like a rock band. Building off the rock tradition allows second track "Like Hippos Swimming to the Moon" to rock constantly despite volume changes and flirtation with different time signatures. The third track—"The Silent Glimpse of Andromeda"—throbs, explodes, and then builds up again before fading. The title track ends the record with the usual high- and low-tide musical dichotomy. It even includes a section that sounds like the E Street Band playing *Born to Run* like it is a post- or prog-rock record. That description sounds weird, but Neil on Impression makes it sound good. (JM)

Grab the Bats, grabthebats.org; Release the Bats, releasethebats.com

Newman, Lauren K. - Postulate I, CD

In my comatose state of summertime mindlessness, I had forgotten what passion sounds like. Many thanks to Lauren K. Newman for this reminder, a postcard from a place where the mind is active and the body fights to articulate something significant. *Postulate I* advocates self-sufficiency in content and execution; Newman wrote and played every moment, all the while barking at a "you" who may have inspired the punch in her drumming and the gall in her lyrics. The album is full of complicated rhythms, ballistic drumming, moans and shouts, smeared guitar, and awesomely unsettling time signatures. On "Long Road Psalm," her deep voice urges "long road / carry on" before searing wails confound any sense of consolation, while "I Can Think of a Better Question" begins as a creepy confrontation, eventually deconstructing into whispers and screams of "Are you even my 'honey'?" Astounding—and a little bit scary. But what I like most is that Newman doesn't even allow the listener to become complacent with her chaotic, discordant bent; after 12 tracks of fierceness, she ends *Postulate I* with "Close the Door," a startlingly gentle love song of discretion and disclosure, which finds her harmonizing with herself, clinging the xylophone, and bonking the piano. Bringing the listener through noise brambles and accusations to somewhere more pleasant, Newman reveals an intensity that's both contagious and attractive. (KG)

Greyday Productions, PO Box 2086, Portland, OR 97208, greydayrecords.com

NOFX - You Will Lose Faith, 7"

You Will Lose Faith is the 10th single in the year-long monthly single series, a purple slab of vinyl featuring two more NOFX songs. I swear these guys must sit down and write like 100 songs at any given time, as they seem to have no shortage of new material to release. "You Will Lose Faith" is a slower, acous-

tic number that is not your typical fare for this band, which seems to be one of the gimmicks of this single series (and a welcome one at that). The flip side, "Last Night Was Really Fun?" is a decent yet formulaic NOFX track. As always, the lyrics are enjoyable, and the A-side stands out from the norm. Meanwhile, the flip side delivers just what you'd expect, so I'd say it's another worthy addition to the mountain of NOFX records in your collection... if you're a fan. (MXV)

Fat Wreck Chords, fatwreck.com

None More Black - This Is Satire, CD

It's been three long years and two lineup changes since None More Black's last LP on Fat, and a good chunk of that time was spent on tightening up the sound, a process made easier by employing J. Robbins to handle production. While the band is still best classified as melodic hardcore, the maturation that took place is evident on tracks like "We Dance on the Ruins of the Stupid Stage," "I See London," and "10 Ton Jiggawatts." Jason Shevchuk's vocals are as hoarse as ever, but there is renewed emotion and energy in the delivery. That vigor, along with a better understanding of themselves as a band, is what drives the band into making *This Is Satire* the band's flagship recording. It's clear that for the first time in a long time None More Black are writing and playing songs that they fully believe in. The wait's been well worth it. (BN)

Fat Wreck Chords, PO Box 193690, San Francisco, CA 94119 fatwreck.com

Northern Liberties - Secret Revolution, CD

Roarrrrr... Grrrrr... Three guys—on bass, drums, and guttural screams, respectively—play definitely heavy, thoroughly metal anthems called things like "Don't Kill My Sister." They pack an impressive stash of effect pedals, which warp the bass from growls to screeches, and include standout percussive passages whereby they rhythmically pummel things with sticks. Opener, "Midnight Train to the Dogfood Factory," sets the LP's tone: raucous, obnoxious, and sometimes absurd. After listening to 19 exhaustive tracks of morbid imagery and slaying bass lines, you may feel tortured enough to write your own Liberties-inspired anthem of pain. I'd simply call mine "Ouch." (KG)

World Eater Records, PO Box 42728, Philadelphia, PA 19101, worldeaterrecords.com

Ohsees - The Cool Death of Island Raiders, CD

If you're going to pique my interest, one of the best ways to do it is with Accordion Man paper dolls and track one: "The Gilded Cunt." The Ohsees' John "Coachwhips" Dwyer's new-ish gig, does both. Happily, they live up to the hype, offering a sunny slice of shimmering quirk-folk with more layers and less confusion than a diner sundae. Dwyer's a talented guy, but it'd be a mistake to highlight him at the expense of his equally adept bandmates: Burmese's Patrick Mullins and Brigid Dawson—who sounds like Karen O on a marshmallow diet. Best, and quite possibly thanks to producer Dave Sitek (TV on the Radio), there's just enough guitar-strum ("Broken Stems") to keep the Ohsees from descending into generic freak-folk pabulum. One problem: Accordion Man has a Beast-Pet, and it's almost impossible to cut out his curly tail. (MC)

Narnack, 381 Broadway, 4th Floor, Suite 3, New York City, NY 10013, narnackrecords.com

on this album it works about 85% of the time. Two of the best examples are "When You Wasn't Famous" and "Two Nations." On "Two Nations" Skinner calmly and cleverly analyzes the differences between the US and the UK, "When You Wasn't Famous" layers a cheesy '80s dance beat and (probably electronically generated) steel drums with complaints about such issues as not being able to do coke in public and secretly dating someone much more famous. Listen to this song on Monday, and you'll still have it in your head on Friday. Another standout track is the serious "Never Went to Church," which deals with the death of Skinner's father. It's simple, understated, and completely honest. The album stutters in a few places, but the few duds are far outweighed by the killer tracks. Once again, Mike Skinner has created a Streets album that is worth listening to over and over and over again. (MP)

Vice Records, 97 N. 10th St. Suite 202, Brooklyn, NY 11211, www.vice-recordings.com



Sunset Rubdown - Shut Up I Am Dreaming, CD

If this can qualify as glam, it is the most questioning, doubtful glam ever attempted. While Sunset Rubdown found its beginnings as a solo project for Spencer Krug—who also moonlights in Frog Eyes and co-fronts Wolf Parade—it now boasts four members total, which has helped to flesh out its sound a vast amount. *Shut Up* is the second full-length from this outfit, and follows up a self-titled EP released earlier this year. Perhaps what is most surprising is how far this album surpasses that EP in scope, execution, and any other form of artistic measurement possible. Where the EP was a playful romp, *Shut Up* is a refined statement. Within the first few seconds, the general temper is already hurled forth by the bombast of "Stadiums and Shrines II," and never lets up throughout the duration of *Shut Up*. Krug is backed up by a bevy on instruments here, which only adds to the warm, familiar hum of each track. From cheap drum machines to xylophones, keyboards, and huge guitars, each instrument finds its own element within these compositions and rises above the mire. While the lyrics range from simplistic to eloquent, every line takes on a different meaning through Krug's outright affectations. The group creates a dynamic lo-fi marching band stomp on the parable of "They Took a Vote and Said No," between pounding drums and hyperactive keyboard lines, and Krug acting as both informer and advisor while repeating, "Well be careful what you wish for," and sounding confident as ever. That being said, this remains an album of longing, of confusion, and of wonder, all the while punctuated by that undeniable, affected yodel of Krug, who belts it out regardless of the topic and quavers easily between continuous shouts and whispers. "Snakes Got a Leg III" starts up with an old-time-y piano line and quickens the pace in an incredible fashion, while "Us Ones in Between" returns to the confusion with Krug confessing, "I want to be alone / but I want your body." Even with an album full of songs that could make incredible closers given their undeniable immediacy, "Shut Up I Am Dreaming of Places Where Lovers Have Wings" closes out the album with a level of grandeur that is entirely off the charts. It is climactic, perfectly timed, and so full of dramatic flair that those seven minutes fly by far too quickly. It is epic, it is absolute marred perfection, and it is shocking in its elegance. There is an exuberant, paranoid splendor that permeates each song of this album, which remains a delicate offering of the inner workings of someone else's brain. It is unique, it is hugely immediate, and it is the best record 2006 has offered so far by a long shot. I can't recommend it enough. (SBM)

Absolutely Kosher, 1412 10th St., Berkeley, CA 94710-1512, absolutelykosher.com



Woods - How to Survive In/In the Woods, CD

This release from the Release the Bats label digitizes what originally appeared on a double cassette. Besides combining two separate cassette EPs, the disc displays the band's two stylistic folk foils. All the songs on this 13-track record are recorded in glorious low fidelity and definitely folksy in content and aesthetic. Half of the time, Woods plays insightful, primarily acoustic, verse-chorus-verse modern folk. Woods sprinkles in some freak-out moments, too. The track "Kid's Got Heart" ends with feedback and a sighing accordion. The en vogue term for this branch of Woods' music is "freak folk." Still, the songs aren't as extended, layered, or freaky as those on the duo's fine *Ram 7*. The vocal melody of "Keep it On" is as hypnotic as a swinging watch, and it makes the song one of the conventional highlights. The rhythm guitar zig-zags down a scale. Reverbed electric guitar dances around the scale like snowflakes. In "Broke," the speaker, against his better judgment and even though he cannot afford the trip, buys a train ticket to see his object of desire. As in millions of memorable pop songs, the love is unrequited. The guy finds himself alone on the platform. He is broke, and his heart is broken. "Broke" is the quintessential modern folk love song, a narrative that uses familiar diction and relies on the audience's universal feelings to convey a precise moment and make the ordinary extraordinary. "8-5-10" shares quirky, homespun aphorisms. "Water in the pot doesn't mean it's ready," Jeremy Earl and Christian DeRoeck sing. Besides the refrain, the other significant line is: "The barber in the army only has one style." Indeed. And throughout the record, Earl and DeRoeck stretch their voices into several vocal styles. They scream, they sing, and they screech in a lo-fi falsetto. In "Make Time for Kitty," a shaky falsetto sings lead from the point of view of a pet cat fed up with being ignored and critical of everyday human life. *How to Survive In/In the Woods* balances conventional and clear folk songs with more experimental tracks and songs with lyrics from skewed perspectives. The lo-fi aesthetic and the band mem-

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Reviewer Spotlight: Brian Moss (BM)

Track Star, Sometimes What's the Difference. An overlooked underdog of the 1990's minimalist indie-pop community, San Francisco's Track Star had a lot more charm than some of their counterparts. Released following a 7" and split cassette, *Sometimes What's the Difference*, packs in eight concise bursts of wispy, ultra-catchy, lo-fi magnetism. Perfect in

their sweetly bare simplicity and fuzzed out quiet/loud pedal smacks, the undeniably adorable songs, and the hiss-muffled recordings that have rendered them eternal, are like puppies, and everyone loves puppies. The band has been inactive since the release of their long-awaited second full-length, *Lions Destroyed the Whole World*, on Better Looking Records in 2002, but word on the streets is that there's a new project brewing, and singer/guitarist/bassist Wyatt Cusick's continues to crank out tunes with his other praise-worthy project, the Aislars Set.

Last five songs played on the white digital device: Big Star, *Don't Lie to Me*; Cleveland Bound Death Sentence, *Between the Lions*; Nouvelle Vague, *Teenage Kicks*; Lazycain, *Largo*; Sleater Kinney, *Give Up*.



Reviewer Spotlight: Bart Niedzialkowski (BN)

Crumbs, the, S/T. OK, while it's true that the Crumbs are technically still around (their most recent LP is out on TKO Records), they will always be a one-record band to me. That's not necessarily saying that their releases prior and after *The Crumbs* were bad, it's just that this particular record was that good. Taking cues from three-chord punk and garage rock, the Crumbs' heavily distorted sound grabs you by the throat and doesn't let go until the very last riff fades out. Until that moment, you find yourself tapping your feet and singing along to the likes of "Shakespeare," "Get On With My Kicks" and the classic "Dead Boys Too"—the song that defines the Crumbs. There is a bit of a lo-fi quality to the record, which is a large part of the charm—especially when you compare it to the over-produced shit that gets passed off as punk rock these days. *The Crumbs* is perhaps the most overlooked punk record of the 1990s, and a definite must-have in your collection.

Consuming my summer: World Cup, Lost Season 1 DVD, Avail re-issues, Andrew Vachss.



Reviewer Spotlight: Missy Paul (MP)

Langley Schools Music Project, Innocence and Despair. In the mid-'70s, a struggling musician became a music teacher for three different elementary schools in rural British Columbia. He taught the kids to play and sing the songs they liked and assembled gymnasium singalongs, which were recorded for the students, parents, and the community. Decades later, these original vinyl recordings, by fluke, were rediscovered, put on CD, and now we can all hear the results, which are quite extraordinary. The children, all between 9-12 years old, are filled with such uninhibited enthusiasm and joy as they tackle Bowie, the Beach Boys, Wings, and other contemporaries of their time. Sure, their renditions are traditional, but I guarantee you've never heard a better hand-clapping, foot-stomping cover of the Bay City Rollers' "Saturday Night" or Wings' "Rock Show," not to mention a spookier version of "Space Oddity." They love every minute of this and you can hear it. Just as well as they do happy, they do tender. "The Long and Winding Road" and "To Know Him is to Love Him" are fantastic, and then there's "Desperado." Performed by a nine year-old girl, this will absolutely break your heart. Over the course of these 19 songs, their energy and emotion is so honest and moving, even the most cynical music fan could not deny these children. This is a truly amazing album that highlights the power of music and a great teacher. Trust me, you owe it yourself to check this out.

What I can't stop listening to these days: Regina Spektor, *Begin to Hope*; Tilly and the Wall, *Bottom of Barrels*; Dresden Dolls, *Yes Virginia*; Power 92's the Hot Boys; Fiery Furnaces, *Bitter Tea*.



Reviewer Spotlight: Rex Reason (RR)

Funkadelic, Maggot Brain. Whether an ardent straightedger or a drug-addled wreck, this record is essential for anyone appreciative of the mind- and consciousness-altering power of music. The title track does exactly that. The story is that producer/mastermind George Clinton told guitarist Eddie Hazel to play as if he had just heard his mother had died and then heard that she was still alive. The result is some haunting psychedelia with no hint of funk. That's quickly remedied by "Can You Get to That?" and "Hit It and Quit It." Later, "Super Stupid" shows what heavy metal would sound like if a superior R & B band had invented it. This hard rock/soulful funk schizophrenia is precisely what made the earliest Funkadelic records so great. Hard and heavy music inherently contains the visceral power and catharsis to which the primitive part of our nature responds. Funk is built around the transcendental groove necessary to make the human body move of its own volition. Very seldom are these elemental aspects of music blended and almost never this well.

Five things to sweat to: Om, *Conference of the Birds*; Drag the River, *It's Crazy*; V/A, *Trojan Records Dub Rarities* box set; Saviours, *Crucifire* (reviewed this issue); Witch, *Witch*.

Reviewer's Spotlight: Matthew Siblo (MS)

The Weakerthans, Left and Leaving. There is a moment at the very beginning of "Everything Must Go," the

Old Haunts - Fuel On Fire, CD

Dear Jesus: Last night, I dreamt about a band that sounded something like John Fogerty in leather pants, with piano. I woke up and heard the Old Haunts, and I swear to god (whoops) that my boom box started smoking. You've answered my prayers (and possibly theirs, too, especially when you brought back their original drummer, Curtis Phillips). Lord, it's true that the Old Haunts can be a bit maudlin ("Uncovered Shoulders," "Severed Skin," etc.), but can't we all? And doesn't "Fuel on Fire's" noodling guitar (not to mention "Civil Savage's" jaunty windup) make up for it? Don't you want to pour one out for Craig Extine's slightly sneering voice? On second thought, maybe you're happier turning water into wine. Either way, I thank you. Amen. (MC)

Kill Rock Stars, 120 NE State Ave, PMB 418, Olympia, WA 98501, killrockstars.com

Oxfam Glamour Models, the - Kick Out the Grams, CDEP

It's not hard to tell who the Oxfam Glamour Models would call their influences: Suede, the Sex Pistols, the Fall. Messy, wall-of-sound-type feedback and dirge-y guitars compete for the foreground with lackluster, semi-buried Johnny Rotten rip-off vocals on the title track, while a softer, more echoing version of the former, "Postmodern Stars," lags afterwards. If the Oxfam Glamour Models really believed their own maxim/chorus from their single's second track, "Nothing's worth doing / it's been done before" they wouldn't have bothered recording these songs, which are little more than gross imitations of their much better, more innovative predecessors. (AMB) Marquis Cha Cha, 679 Holloway Rd. London N19 5SE, marquis-chacha.co.uk

Path of Resistance - Can't Stop the Truth, CD

Some things in life can make an ex-vegan straight-edge kid like myself feel a little guilty at times. When a bunch of punks shouted "dairy's murder!" at my wife and me from their car window as we sat next to the Dairy Queen last weekend, we couldn't help but laugh. The new album from Path of Resistance is, however, no laughing matter. This is another fine collection of hook-laden metallic hardcore with a strong environmental/animal rights message, just as you would expect from Earth Crisis alumni. Like the first album, released 10 years ago, *Can't Stop the Truth* is a tight collection that belies the bands status as an on-again/off-again project band. (CL)

Victory, victoryrecords.com

Permanent Me - Dear Virginia, CD

I get skeptical when bands are touted for their association with other bands rather than for their own merit. Such is the case with Long Island upstarts Permanent Me, who boast an impressive roster of friends according to their bio. All the friends in the world can't make up for songs that are just OK. *Dear Virginia* is a five-song EP of easy-on-the-ears pop-rock that would serve as a good backdrop to a day in the sun at the Warped Tour. However, unlike their Long Island contemporaries that command attention with over the top hooks and infectious choruses, Permanent Me are a pleasant listen and little more. (SK)

www.isurrenderrecords.com

Pentagram - First Daze Here Too: The Vintage Collection, CD

Hail Pentagram! Relapse continues to release the lost 1970s recordings of the proto doom metal band with this second set of studio material and rehearsal tapes. The first set, 2002's *First Daze Here* was a sludge-encased lost treasure—1970s America's answer to Black Sabbath finally widely available. That collection is the best start for '70s Pentagram, with this second compilation providing a nice supplement. A couple of the songs on this new set are alternate versions of songs released on the earlier collection. Otherwise, these songs are additional studio recordings and live tracks of widely varying quality. Where the first collection highlighted Pentagram's mud-soaked heaviness, *First Daze Here Too* reveals the band's 1970's boogie rock leanings. While the band was going for a Stooges-meets-Blue Cheer feel, at times it descends into Black Sabbath playing Ted Nugent covers. That's a minor gripe about this excellent artifact of one of rock music's great lost bands. While the first collection is essential for anyone into Sabbath and their spawn, *First Daze Here Too* is only very slightly less so. (RR)

Relapse Records, PO Box 2060, Upper Darby, PA 19082, relapse.com

Pete Philly & Perquisite - Mind State, CD

Ever considered the hip-hop scene in Holland? Me neither. But with a debut record as slick as *Mindstate*, international heads are about to take notice. The talented duo of Pete Philly and Perquisite (Perq) follow in the steps of Atmosphere, with Philly handling rhymes and Perq throwing around beats and production. The end product is a concept album that revolves around different moods and emotions, which are reflected in the title of each song, such as "Eager," "Paranoid," and "Insomnia," to name a few. Hokey as it sounds, the music surpasses it instantly, between smooth bass lines and piano accents that convey the influences of soul and jazz at work, and tackling such common topics only serves to make the duo's end product that much more accessible. The rhymes are on-point, the flow is simple, and the beats reflect a grab bag of influences. Philly's nuanced voice should appease fans of Talib Kweli, the special guests on this effort (especially Senna Gourdou on "Mellow") are worth checking out, and standouts like "Paranoid" and "Relieved" alone make this well worth the investment. Recommended. (SBM)

Anti, 2798 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90026, anti.com

Popzillas, the - The Incredible Adventures of Pandora Pop, CD

As busy as I am, there's not a lot of free time during the day to leisurely listen to music. Alas, for near-consistent listening opportunities, I turn to my daily morning or early afternoon shower sessions, which offer up a chance to get my clean on and check out new joints that have been recommended by friends or assigned as reviews. On one ill-fated morning not so long ago I popped this particular disc into the deck and suddenly, a usually pleasing experience turned into a grating one. Soaking wet and unable to dart out from behind the curtain in my birthday suit to stop the audio abuse, I let the beating continue, with the shower head dishing out drip torture and my normally soothing washcloth having been transformed

into steel wool by the evil powers of audio shape-shifting. Unless you're into Deutschland cornballs playing teen movie style motivational power-pop complete with white-girl pseudo-soul vibratos and lyrical atrocities, I'd avoid this one, especially when embarking on cleansing endeavors. However, for the masochistic few and proud that take pleasure in seeing skin, blood, and oozing piles of lost brain cells lingering by the drain following shower time, it doesn't get any better than this. (BM)

Wolverine Records, Im Huckinger Kamp 43a 47259 Dulsburg-Germany wolverine-records.de

Protestant/Rhino Charge - Split, 7"

As soon as the needle hit the grooves for the first Rhino Charge song, I checked to see if the record was on the right speed. It was. Rhino Charge is just that fast. There's no bass, so the sound is a little thin at times. But as far as grind goes, Rhino Charge is near the top of the heap. I'll be checking out their future releases. The Protestant side maintains the high standard set on the A-side. With only two songs (versus Rhino Charge's six), their songs are longer and more epic. Protestant's strength lies in their songs' diversity. Take a chunk of His Hero is Gone styled hardcore, throw in some grind parts and sludge parts, and you have an idea of where Protestant is coming from. Usually I'm not into the styles of music that both these bands play, but Protestant and Rhino Charge are exceptions to the rule. (DA)

930 E. Brady St., Milwaukee, WI 53202, skullfreehardcore.cjb.net

Retisonic - Levittown, CD

This is the latest brainchild of Jason Farrell, who did time in such fine Washington DC bands as Swiz and Blue Tip. I've always had a soft spot for DC area bands dating way back to the beginnings of Dischord Records; there just seems to be something special musically about that area. Retisonic definitely fit in that DC post-punk mold. The songs are very much rock based, with some meaty riffs and angular guitars, yet they are hook-laden and very melodic. At times I'm reminded a little of some of the better Blue Tip stuff, but I think I like this EP more than anything Jason did in his previous band. Six songs on this EP and not a bad one in the bunch. (MXV)

Modern City Records, moderncityrecords.com

Retrospectro - Anodyne, CD

Retrospectro plays some of the most unlistenable stuff I've heard in a long time. Their songs lack taste or any understanding of aesthetics and seem aimed at achieving the most annoying combination of repetitions possible. At times mimicking Bob Dylan or Lou Reed, vocalist Nestor Cora's overuse of repetitive refrains and harmonies (e.g. the opening track, "Sleepwalking" which repeats "Oops / I'm drowning in my head" at least a hundred times) made me want to scream, while the guitar, bass, and key lines offered little relief from this lack of imagination. I could barely get to the end of one song, let alone all eight in one sitting. (AMB)

Rainy Day Records, rainydayrecords.com

Rosetta - The Galilean Satellites, 2xCD

In another review in this issue, I had criticized a Tzadik band for being, as I wrote, "dramatic." So, bear with my hypocrisy here as I heap praise on one of the

greatest metal albums I've heard in years. Rosetta are, indeed, dramatic, but in the way that suffocation, space travel, or psychedelic drugs are dramatic, and the means by which they achieve such drama in their music is to be patient and direct with their sound—to grant painstakingly meticulous care to the atmosphere of their work. At its surface, the five songs on the first disc of *The Galilean Satellites* are a relatively uncommon blend of delay-soaked shoegaze-y intros and fairly straightforward sludge/shred metal. The most common link, in terms of sound, might be later Neurosis or early Isis, but the arrangements of these songs sound like the group had been influenced as much by Slowdive or the Telescopes as they might have been by the former groups. Regardless of all that, this is impressive work. All five tracks clock in at around 10 minutes, which should be appreciated by anyone who enjoys their metal epic. As an added bonus, the second disc of this set allows the group to explore strictly noise and soundscape material, which, according to some listeners, serve as excellent accompaniment to the five "songs" on disc one. (If you can get two CD players to coordinate in such a way, let me know.) All told, this one's a keeper—give it a listen if you haven't already, as this is one album that must be heard to be truly appreciated. (JIC)

Translation Loss Records, translationloss.com

Saviours - Crucifire, CD

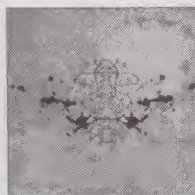
If you've let satan into your heart, Saviours will rekindle your hate for christ. Over eight pre-thrash metal songs these members of Yaphet Kotto and Drunk Horse slam out anthems about satan, christ-hunting, pentagrams, and other classic second wave of metal topics. The music behind these poems of sacrilege could have come from 1982. Venom is the most obvious touchstone, as Saviours play a grinding, raw brand of metal with the slightest of punk rock leanings. The sound is dense without murkiness and thankfully not the sort of ultra processed production so many modern metal bands opt for. While it's a distinctly retro trip, *Crucifire* doesn't sound dated. Naysayers may cry "false metal" due to the band's musical background, but everything but the singing style is credible New Wave of British Heavy Metal sound with a hint of what's happened in metal since the early '80s. That singing is a hardcore influenced approach free of the falsetto or grunting that often brings metal close to parody, so while not necessarily period correct, it works for the music. (RR)

Level Plane Records, PO Box 7926, Charlottesville, VA 22906, level-plane.com

Sems, the - Any Day Ago, CD

Yes, the sophomore effort from this one-man studio project quickly defines itself with an enveloping succession of fragile, synth-driven pop soundscapes. But it's not until the sixth of the disc's 14 tracks—the intoxicating "The Last Noise"—that it starts pacing down roads toward a higher plateau. Just a hair under two minutes long, the song contains every element that lends the Sems its ethereal charm: the carefully overlapping guitars, pulsing tides of keyboard, understated electronic backbeats, Pete Bogolub's sulen whisper. What follows does not disappoint: from the glassy "Pigeons" and the lullaby xylophone and echoing drums of "Float in Space" to the more dance-

bers' chemistry are the mutual friends that help the traditional folk and freak folk coexist. (JM)
Release the Bats, releasethebats.com



Yellow Swans - Psychic Secession, CD

So this is what they call noise rock, more or less, and is it sure to harm your eardrums if you're not careful! Formerly of Portland, and now hailing from Oakland, the duo of Yellow Swans returns on this, their second full-length release, to bash the listener's head inside out through their version of experimental noise, with sporadic moments of melodic intent. Though it is a full-length record, there are only four tracks, and the first of those, "True Union," clocks in at slightly over twenty minutes. For the most part, those

minutes are spent in a drone of static feedback, balanced between high-pitched freak-outs and a steady low-end that becomes almost hypnotic in its intensity. Vocals hit about halfway through the track, though in the spirit of Wolf Eyes, they are distorted to the point of oblivion and only add to the rest of the storm. Other tracks here offer up a bit more variety in relation to both sound and structure, especially on "I Woke Up," which has a section focused entirely on hand claps and drum beats amid the noise. "Psychic Secession" offers up the only vocals on the record that can be heard with any sort of clarity, and "Velocity of the Yolk" slows down the pace for an ending that verges on euphoric when compared to other tracks. Otherwise, the textural, screaming feedback is likely to bring your speakers to the brink of destruction, and it is easy enough to lose track of everything going on inside of this music as the sound pounds in, toppling upon itself every time. It is a unique feat of some kind, to be sure, but what that amounts to remains entirely unclear, as the entire record remains a droning, perpetual sound that offers up little respite from its howling sense of chaotic metal activity. For the initiated, it becomes an impressive exploration of the effects and limitations of sound; for all others, you'll want to start with the volume on low. (SBM)

Load Records, PO Box 35, Providence, RI 02901, loadrecords.com

able beats and electronic-assisted shuffle of "Yesterday." It's an inviting disc of indie pop and swirling (but subdued) electronica, one whose dreamy studio vision extends beyond what's often delivered by one man and an arsenal of keyboards. (JV)

Recordhead & Whiggs, c/o LUNA Music, 1315 W. 86th St., Indianapolis, IN 46260, lunamusic.net

Shapes and Sizes - S/T, CD

This is a well-thought-out collection of songs. The craftsmanship alone on these tracks tends to raise the bar for other bands. The problem is to get folks to know who the Shapes and Sizes are. Multiple male and female vocals are in the spotlight as the main instruments. Mind you there's only four folks in the band, even though they did get some back up help on this record via saxophones, trumpets, viola and vibraphones. The basic formula is quant music of the indie rock persuasion that tends to be on the mellower side of things, but these kids also like to rock it out and let it explode into the unexplored. This band takes chances and can even make a whistling solo sound good. If this Canadian group was from DC, they would easily fit into that scene and would probably even show up on Dischord Records, even though this isn't the regular stuff that Dischord puts out. The complexity is well balanced with the catchiness, and I really can't say enough good things, except they still have room to improve on an already great project so watch out for these folks. (DM)

Asthmatic Kitty Records, asthmatickitty.com

Shoplifting - Body Stories, CD

Having reviewed Shoplifting's debut Kill Rock Stars EP and finding it all too derivative of a variety of angular Northwestern lo-fi indie acts, I was a bit apprehensive upon receiving their latest full-length. While the Unwound influence is still prevalent, the band has branched out into more experimental territories, incorporating noisy layers of effects, spook-dance

breaks, and abstracted melody clashing. Furthermore, both the band's provocative lyrics (predominantly charged critiques of gender and sexuality) and their commitment to joining independent music and activism are entirely commendable within the current influx of apathy. My tattered strains of optimism lead me to believe that one of the best things about existence is that there's always room for improvement. Shoplifting proves it true and has found a fan in me. (BM)

Kill Rock Stars, 120 NE State Ave. PMB 418 Olympia, WA 98501, killrockstars.com

Singley, Alan & Pants Machine - Loving Kindness, CD

Though Alan Singley's vocal cords still sound stuck in juvenile territory, he and Pants Machine are able to pull off an array of pop gems on this, his second full-length offering. Acoustic guitars are picked, drums point along pleasantly, and it is easy to pick up the chorus by the end of each track. Yes, it is cutesy sunshine folk pop about summertime and burritos, but it is when the sugar high slows down long enough to drift away from the folk-pop formula ("Hollywood rollercoaster," "Watersong") that the songs become truly memorable. Mixing California-styled pop with a singer-songwriter aesthetic, the result is a collection of quick bubbled-up vignettes. So take a listen and lighten up, if that's your thing. (SBM)

Slow January Records, 2658 Griffith Park Blvd. #740, Los Angeles, CA 90039, slowjanuary.com

Smartbomb - Chaos and Lawlessness, CD

Just last night, while my girlfriend and I were skimming (via Tivo) through MTV2's *Subterranean* (hey, I gotta keep up on the indie-rock trends for my record store day job), I asked her how she felt, as a fan of what's become labeled "indie rock," to see it become a brand, for all intents and purposes. The same thing has happened to both punk and metal, obviously, and we had a good little talk about the lines blurring

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHTS

opening track of the Weakerthans second album, where singer John Samson whispers the line, "Garage sale Saturday / I need to pay my heart's outstanding bills." Set against a few austere chords, this simple yet effective allusion sounds both achingly familiar and poignant. It's this very trick that has made Samson so successful throughout his career. Samson's lyrical triumphs are far too frequent to list, but it's impossible to talk about this album without indulging in its greatest strength. Listening to songs like "Pamphleteer" and "Left and Leaving" could make even the most cold-hearted anarcho-punk get wistful, and I'm pretty sure they do every time they're played for slow dances at the annual G7 picnic. But make no mistake: Samson's no hack—rarely does he save his best lines for the obligatory down-tempo tearjerker. Lest we not forget that this is the man who was able to inject earnest vulnerability into an album whose track list included song titles like "Fuck Machine" and "Stick the Fucking Flag up Your Goddam Ass, You Sonofabitch." Instead, some of *Left and Leaving's* most rollicking songs—"Aside" and "There is a Fire Door" in particular—manage to elicit more genuine emotion than any token acoustic song you're likely to hear on a contemporary punk record. *Left and Leaving* is a heartbreaking statement of hope and loss, its rich imagery and emotional complexity yet to be rivaled by any who've risen in their (continuing) wake.

All I ever wanted was to be your spine: Destroyer, Destroyer's *Rubies*; the Books, *Lemon of Pink*; Phoenix, *It's Never Been Like That*, the Loved Ones, *S/T*; the Potatomen, *Now*.



Reviewer Spotlight: Justin Vellucci (JV)

Jesus Lizard, *Liar*. The Jesus Lizard's third full-length, released some 14 years ago, simply is without rival. A pummeling, explosive record, it's one of those rare discs that connects those who've discovered it. We all remember the blood-curdling thrill of being ripped out of our seats by the jackhammer rumble of the album-opening "Boiler-maker" and the roiling force of "Rope." We talk about the first time we bounced off a wall to the catchy hooks of "Puss" or roared with David Yow to the throat-tearing refrains of "The Art of Self Defense" or "Dancing Naked Ladies." Not a single song, in the midst of all that fury, was out of place, each track a vicious bark from an uncaged beast. All 10 songs hit their mark and tear it to shreds. Even now, the group's tightly wound form of attack—the ear-splitting punk roar undercut with David Wm. Sims' and Mac McNeilly's bluesy percussive swagger or Duane Denison's jazzy guitar figures—continues to inspire young musicians, as well it should. But nobody's managed to replicate Yow's strange stage presence. And nobody's created a sequel to *Liar*.

I'll calm down when I'm shaken: Clogs, *Lantern*; Carrie Yury, *Mutter*; the For Carnation, *S/T*; Fugazi, *The Argument*; Race Against Space, untitled demo.



Reviewer Spotlight: Mike Vinikour (MXV)

Flower Laperds, *The Original Group*. When I was in high school, I often bought punk rock compilations in an effort to hear new bands. I'd buy any compilation I found, provided that I heard the name of at least one band on it. It was *Mystic Sampler Volume 2* that introduced me to the Flower Laperds. Their song, "Preacher's Confession," was a clever song of a disgruntled priest told in the first person. It was the best song on the comp, and I immediately wanted everything the band ever did. That equated to a 7" and a couple of other compilation appearances. This LP compiled everything they did for the Mystic Records label with the original lineup, and the stuff was remixed and sounded a lot better than the original appearances. They were easily my favorite band ever on the Mystic label, which had a lot of great punk rock in the 1980s. There was something dark, mysterious, and unique about the Flower Laperds that made them stand out from the rest of the label's roster and, to this day, they go on every mix CD I make for myself and/or friends. I played this LP so much I seriously wore out my first copy of it. It has been out of print for more than 15 years now, but after lobbying to have it reissued for two years, it is finally happening this fall!

While on the mend and trapped in Combustion Manor, these have helped keep my sanity: Skinny Puppy, *Vivisection VI*; Hey Taxi, *I Hate Dogs 7"*; Monster Magnet, *Dopes to Infinity*; V/A, *The Big Apple Rotten to the Core*; Ism, *A Diet for the Worms LP*.

between majors and indies and blah blah blah. Just then, an Anti-Flag video came on for their major label debut, and I vomited all over the floor. Okay, everything is true, except for the vomit part, but I sure felt like puking. In a day and age where bands like Anti-Flag are signing to RCA, I'm especially thankful for bands like Smartbomb. First of all, right there on the disc it says "DIY," and the packaging is nothing more than a sleeve with some photocopied inserts. Musically, Smartbomb graduated from the Kid Dynamite School of Melodic Hardcore, but with more a focus on the hardcore, rather than the melodic, aspects of songwriting. The eight songs on this disc just barely top the 11-minute mark, but pack enough punch that this might as well have been a full-length. Overall, Smartbomb encompasses everything that Anti-Flag wished they still stood for: anti-materialism, anti-capitalism, and anti-scene point bullshit. Fuck corporate punk; long live Smartbomb! (DH)

Self-released, myspace.com/smartbombpunks

Smoking Popes – At Metro, CD/DVD

Smoking Popes are one of the greatest punk rock treasures Chicago has ever had to offer, standing proudly amongst Naked Raygun, Screaming Weasel, and Articles of Faith. When they called it a day in 1998, it didn't seem like an untimely breakup to me. Nevertheless, a sense of loss was apparent, as I heard random Smoking Popes covers played in basements and VFW halls across the suburbs for years. Then, in November of 2005, much to the pleasure of the city that missed them so much, they came back for one night. *At Metro* is the audio and visual document of their return, and, in a way, it's a live greatest hits compilation spanning their entire career. The swelling energy of the room is apparent on the CD and even more so with the DVD, as you can see and hear the years of anticipation. Their return to the Metro must have sparked something within the band, because they have since decided to pick up where they left off years earlier and are touring and writing music again. For those who were there or simply love the Smoking Popes, this is a must-have. (SK)

Victory Records, 346 N. Justine Suite 504, Chicago, IL 60607
www.victoryrecords.com

Spirit That Guides Us, the – North and South, CD

Poses, triteness, and poor sequencing fatally harm this record, which surveys several indie-rock sub-genres. In "Eyes of a Killer," a rock song with staccato and muted guitar chords, the band screams the verses but kills the mood by leaning on carnival-organ synths. The Spirit That Guides Us yanks the mood in two different directions, just like the album title. In "Defence [sic] Mechanism," the band sings the refrain, "I'm my own worst enemy!" Indeed, the band is trying way too hard to sound cool to too many people. The lyrics in "Accelerator" are trite even for a driving song. And breathlessly repeating "Correct me if I'm wrong here" just sounds awkward in a rock song. For the first two-thirds of the album, the Spirit That Guides Us seems to be playing a rock band more than rock music. When some of the best music emerges in the final few tracks, it's too late. This album's poor moments overshadow the potential. (JM)

Goodfellow Records, 22 Wilson St., Hamilton, ON, L8R 1C5, Canada, goodfellowrecords.com

Stoley PT – Lesson #1, CD

Mark my words: Stoley's life needs to be made into a movie, and he should be in charge of writing the score. Born in Chicago, the one name gent had a band (the Lupins) with a song featured on the *Dumb and Dumber* soundtrack, was involved in a major label bidding war, was a taste-making DJ on Q101 in the Windy City, won one year in a luxury New York City apartment courtesy of the crappy MTV cockroach movie *Joe's Apartment*, has recorded with Built to Spill and Modest Mouse producer Phil Ek, and is the gun-toting, NASCAR-driving Jesus on *Late Night with Conan O'Brien*. And, he's got a pretty cool indie rock band that is retroactively pursuing the commendable path that Chicago's underrated and rumored-to-be-reuniting power-pop champion Fig Dish took to its underrated fame. (SM)

stoley.com

Talbott, Michael and the Wolfkings – Freeze Die Come to Life, CD

Containing mellow and melancholy folk rock with a similar approach as Kings of Convenience and Eric Matthews, this record sounds really good, especially the mixing. This always helps the overall presentation of a record, but in the case of sparse acoustic tracks, whenever supplements like banjo, piano, violin, and trumpet come in, there is a balance that must be made. Here, the stripped-down acoustic base is always present and is never outshined. The songs are relatively upbeat and the overall feel transcends that of a rainy day soundtrack. The only drawback is that this record loses gas towards the last couple of tracks. Playing slow music all the time doesn't always make for the best records from top to bottom. (EG)

Antenna Farm Records, PO Box 29855, Oakland, CA 94604, antennafarmrecords.com

That Fucking Tank/Monster Killed by Laser – Split, 7"

This is a really nicely packaged 7" with two new Leeds bands, each covering a classic King Crimson track. Although I'd never heard either band before this split single, I'm just going to assume from the silly band names (and the fact they're both covering King Crimson), that they're both ADHD-afflicted math-y spazz rock bands, OK? That Fucking Tank cover "Red" in a fairly straightforward manner, sounding like a guy playing guitar with another guy playing drums, ambling through the track in a practice space. After checking through the credits, it appears that's exactly what's happening. Monster Killed by Laser do the same, but with "Larks Tongues in Aspic (Part 2)," and to better effect, probably because they have a full band to take care of the numerous parts (they even include the whistles). It's a cute 7" with a nice theme, but I'd love to have heard some original material by both bands, too. (CL)

Run of the Mill Records, runofthemillrecords.co.uk

Two Gallants – What the Toll Tells, CD

Though this is a duo, they try and fill as much space as possible. How to fill this space is always a tricky thing with only two band members. Do you add all sorts of instruments so that it would be impossible pull off in a live setting? Well, similar to the Like Young and the Evens, Two Gallants rely on rich melodies to take up the space. *What the Toll Tells* is a grab bag of dark gothic folk mixed in with some blues-drenched ga-

rage rock and mid-tempo pop rock. With this record coming out on Saddle Creek, it's very easy to compare a large percentage of Two Gallants' music to a number of other bands on the label (vocalist/guitarist Adam Stephens has that wavering vocal style that you've heard before). But I would not consider this an easy-to-swallow version of Bright Eyes for the masses. Would Conor Oberst pull out a full-fledged pop-punk song on one of his albums? Not to my ears. That said, this is another worthwhile Saddle Creek release. (EG) Saddle Creek Records, PO Box 8554, Omaha, NE 68108-0554, saddle-creek.com

Venom - Metal Black, CD

Do we really need another Venom album? No, we don't. I mean, is there anything the band can come up with in this day and age that's going to match the sloppy, grungy, glorious perfection of their early work? No, there isn't. But none of that really matters. They're fucking Venom, and they'll put out as many albums as they want because Satan has willed them to do so. And I, for one, am glad he has. Venom is basically the New York Dolls of heavy metal. Their immense influence on thrash, death, and black metal far outweighs their limited musical ability. At this point, the only remaining member from the line-up that recorded on their seminal *Welcome to Hell* and *Black Metal* albums is bassist/vocalist Cronos. He's joined on the new album *Metal Black* (clever how they switched that title around, eh?) by his brother Antton on drums and guitarist Mike Hickey. And it's not a bad album, I must say. It's a pretty fast and loose affair, as you'd expect, with tons of tight chugging power riffs all over the place, and B-horror movie lyrics. About half the tracks are pretty killer, too—"Rege Satanas," "A Good Day to Die," and "Maleficarvm" among them. Ultimately, fans listen to Venom not for some new musical insight, but because their wild, thrashing rave-ups give us the same kind of goofy thrill that we get from watching *Return of the Living Dead* or *Night of the Demons*. It's all good wholesome fun for people who consider Halloween a sacred holiday. (AJ) Sanctuary Records, sanctuaryrecordsgroup.com

Versus the Mirror - Home, CD

Thank you Equal Vision: thank you for restoring my faith in emo (AWOL since 1996). No joke: Home is easily one of the finest debut albums I've heard in some time. Although *Versus the Mirror* may have one of the dumbest names I've heard in some time (and coming at a time in punk where stupid names have reached some kind of nadir, this is no small feat), I'm sure this album will find many fans; even jaded 20-to-30-somethings like me will find a lot here to remind them of some of the finest moments of their precious '90s. Indeed, on Home, there are definite hints of Quicksand and Portraits of Past, two names I wouldn't usually throw around while reviewing modern screamo. The production is excellent—huge, while never sounding processed—and the band is as tight as a bunch of kids who probably spent every night for several years playing music in their folk's garages. And then there are the hooks: every track is dripping with them. I only wish the vocals were a little more intelligible: the strictly monotone screaming (but thank god there's no singing) prevents Home from being the collection of memorable tunes it could have been. I'm really looking

forward to hearing more from *Versus the Mirror*. In the meantime, you owe it to yourself to pick up this album. This one's going in the keeper pile. (CL) Equal Vision, equalvision.com

Weeds, the - The Million Sounds of Black, CD

To hear the Weeds' sophomore album, *The Million Sounds of Black*, is to walk a tightrope of critical emotions. On one hand, it draws from a well of influence that rarely sees action. The band's doom and gloom post-punkery calls to mind Public Image Limited, Pere Ubu, and the Fall. Hi-hats are battered, flaming guitars are ground into audio sod, and a mildly annoying synthesizer acts as the life-preserver keeping the Weeds afloat. In addition, the group makes no bones about their love for the Residents, as evinced by their first album title (*Meat the Weeds*), reminiscent album art, and taste for the strange. This influence is buried a bit deeper, coming out more in the scattered rendering of songs rather than the actual content. The other thought that comes to mind, while balancing on the tightrope, is the band's mediocre execution. While the Weeds don't try to reenact Johnny Lydon's every move, their specific synthesis of thoughts and influences is only occasionally striking. "Transmission Futile" and "Rations" both employ the same tricks as the rest of the record but are the only tracks whose lacerating sound leaves more than mere irritation. *The Million Sounds of Black* closes with a massive, 45-minute long bookend of seemingly improvised noise. Whether or not that's a lazy maneuver depends on the listener's tolerance/love for free-form meandering. The Weeds show hints of talent on this release—ones that could feasibly be refined into something bizarre and ear-assaulting—but it's going to take more than influences to trigger such refinement. (SRM) Hungry Eye Records, PO Box 20403, Tompkins Square Station, New York, NY 10009 hungryeyerecords.com

Whorehouse of Representatives - Discography 1993-1999, CD

Whorehouse of Representatives was one of the better '90s hardcore bands, and this 31-track collection of their material brings back many fond memories. It's easy to make knee-jerk comparisons to other female-centric hardcore bands such as Antischism, but Whorehouse's frequent tempo changes and rawness put the band in a category all its own. Even for those of us who will never part with the band's original vinyl releases, this discography contains hard to find cassette-only demos, thus making it essential to all. It's also available as a beautifully packaged double LP. (AE) Inimical Records, PO Box 2803, Seattle, WA 98111, inimical.com, Un-Yellman Records, PO Box 4171, Seattle, WA 98194, worldsofresources.com/unyellman

V/A - Ecstatic Peace, CD

This is a mini zine that comes with a compilation CD. I like the cut and paste zine a lot, because it contains a photo of Lou Reed at his lowest ebb (AKA: Sally Can't Dance era). Other than that, it's just extremely mediocre. The compilation CD features pretty straightforward, flavorless bands you'd expect to find in your Myspace.com "New Friend Request" box. All the lyrics are pretty banal. Apparently, Thurston Moore has something to do with this zine. I like Thurston because he has a lot of records. Also, whenever he appears in documentaries, his commentary is typi-

cally the highlight of the film. What Thurston should release next (if he actually is involved with this) is a compilation of all the sound bytes from the various documentaries he has been in. (RL) Ecstatic Peace Records, ecstaticpeace.com

V/A - It Came From the Hills: Volume 1, CD

So, this is what Magic Bullet has been up to these days. I must admit: I haven't paid much attention. Well, since I presume that nobody likes to read long-winded compilation reviews, I'll try to distill the essence of these 12 bands in a sentence or two each. Ready? Jinxed at Twelve play heavy pop rock with keyboards but haven't quite refined the song-writing process at this point in time. Nitro Tokyo play straight-up cock rock, while Taint's "Poison Pen Attack" provides the comp's saving grace at only the third track: big, sludge-like, mid-tempo rock riffs with a few stoner influences and more than enough head-bang potential. This Will Destroy You obliges us with one of the weakest distortion kick-ins of all-time following some clean-channel emo. Paul Michel presents a well-rounded electro-acoustic pop tune that isn't half bad if you can deal with the wussy-guy vocals; Aughra give us some trip hop that never develops. Cave In's Stephen Brodsky does his usual solo acoustic thing with overdubs galore. Everything after this

Magic Bullet Records, 17 Argyle Hills Dr., Fredericksburg, VA 22405, magicbulletrecords.com

V/A - The Funhouse Comp Thing, CD

I saw the Invisible Eyes play at the Scene in Glendale, California a few months ago. I had never heard of them and don't really care much for new bands I had never heard of before. I was tired, semi-drunk, and restless. I came because Jeffrey Lee Pierce's sister Jacqui and her husband Johnny were booked to DJ that night. So there I sat, broken spirit with a gin & tonic, feeling miserable. Then this nerdy guy came onstage and I thought, "What in the world?" But his group played and played and glory infected my ears. Amazing garage punk, whatever, from Seattle, Washington. It was very exciting. Jacqui and Johnny ended up buying a record, but my money was spent on automobile gas to get home. Here they are again: the Invisible Eyes, on this *Comp Thing*, song number 25. I listened, and I'm happy to be alive. (MF) The Fun House, 206 5th Avenue, N. Seattle, WA 98109, thefunhouseseattle.com

V/A - Welcome to the Future, 10"

Highwheel Records showcases dark post-punk, new wave, and somewhat shoegaze-y performances. A rickety guitar riff drives the title track by Walking Bicycles, and bursts of loud guitar end it. "Subtraction" by Arks

DEMOLITION DERBY CD-R REVIEWS

Doug Travis - Getting Crafty, CD-R

Doug Travis presents a photocopied cover, a scribbled on CD-R, and eight tracks of metal/grindcore for your pleasure. The songs on *Getting Crafty* would have benefited from a better recording. However, though heavily borrowed, they have some catchy hooks and pulls to keep you listening. Nothing spectacular, but it's still one of the better demos I have heard in awhile. (EA) myspace.com/dougtravis

Exit the King - S/T, CD

Exit the King is a deranged Dillinger Escape Plan/Orthrelm hybrid. Nifty playing and production, but I'm starting to find all this discordant guitar wankery just plain annoying. (CL) myspace.com/exittheking

Fahrenheit 451 - The New Empire, CD

Politically charged melodic punk/rock 'n' roll with dead-on delivery and poignant writing. This is one band I'll be keeping an eye on. (BN) f451.org.uk

Firing Squad - Demo 2005, CD-R

This high-quality four-song demo from New Jersey is heavily influenced by Naked Raygun in a satisfying and promising way. I eagerly await their future releases. (AE) Self-released, firingsquad@mutualaid.org

One Small Step - You Can Say a Thousand Words/Wake Up, Springtime!, CD-R

Louisville's One Small Step, a young male/female duo, makes bedroom new wave and techno perhaps inspired by the Postal Service. Synth, crisply rhythmic guitars and loops, and manipulated vocals phased into the mix are all expertly produced. If the duo tightens and polishes the song structures, this demo will be a gem. (JM) Self-released, 161 Pennsylvania Ave., Louisville, KY 40206, myspace.com/onesmallstep

Reanimators, the - Alive Again, CD-R

Was this recorded in the early '80s? It has that '82 street punk/hardcore feel to it. Competent Bad Brains cover too. (DA) Brendan Maki, 158 Melrose, Elmhurst, IL 60126

point on the compilation (the seventh track) is a total waste of time. Unassuming, instrumental emo takes a boring rock turn and calls itself Forensics, while Tephras honestly—and we're talking to a T—sound like they entered an Isis sound-alike contest. Really, the rip-off is blatant on so many levels that Isis should sue these guys. Light Yourself on Fire, Snowblood, and Earthen Sea are all not worth describing, so I won't. Besides, this review has far surpassed its desired length. In conclusion: TAINT. (SJM)

sounds like Joy Division's take on death metal. The Monster Women close Side A with a rather stripped, melodic piece of new wave. Airlie's contribution, "Peoria," begins the second side with a mid-tempo beat, overlapping vocals, and sustained guitar squall reminiscent of My Bloody Valentine. Rhineland Bastards' "Registered Trademarks, Patents and Keys" shifts among arpeggios and effects noise, hammering chords and swirling keys, and ringing chords. Not bad. (JM) Highwheel Records, [No contact info. given]

REVIEWED THIS MONTH @ PUNKPLANET.COM

A Step Apart - Structure, 7"
Accelera Deck - A Landslide of Stars, CD
Acrobats, the - Go Down Swinging, CD
Aeroplane, 1929 - To Persevere, CD
Aggrolites, the - S/T, CD
American Heartbreak - S/T, CD
Anxieties, the - Black Hole in the Center of My Brain, 7"
Arrington de Dioniso - Breath of Fire, CD
Asbest - Klaus Rofobi, 7"
Atreyu - A Death Grip on Yesterday, CD
Bad Rackets, the - Full on Blown Apart, CD
Bamboo Kids, the - S/T, 7"
Bathtub Shitter - Dancehall Grind, CD
Big Nurse - S/T, 7"
Black Heart Procession, the - The Spell, CD
Black Hollies, the - Crimson Reflections, CD
Blatant - Boy in the Mirror, CD
Bodies Lay Broken - Discursive Decomposing Disquisitions of Moldered Malapropisms and Sedulous Solecisms 2000 - 2002, CD
Born to Lose - Sweet Misery, CD
Bouncing Souls - The Gold Record, CD
Casey Jones - The Messenger, CD
Casitone for the Painfully Alone - Etiquette, CD
Cave Deaths - Glacier on Fire, CD
Chambermaids, the - S/T, CD
Chinese Happy - Rampage, CD
Concrete Facelift - Uuaagghhhh, 7"
Cortez/Ventura - Split, 10"
Cougars - Pillow Talk, CD
Dead Heart Bloom - S/T, CD
Death to Tyrants - Wake Up and Be, CD
Die Monit Batsss/Les Georges Leningrad - Split, 7"
Disco Doom/Ventura - Captain Pedal & Mr. Scar/Issues, Split 10"
Diskonto - Watch Us Burn, CD
Disobedients - Getta Whiffa Dis, CDEP
Doers, the - Whatcha Doin'?, CD
Downey, Mike - Adventure, Bless and Don't be Sorry, CD

Dryline - Reach for the Surface, CD
Ducky Boys, the - The War Back Home, CD
Elephants - Music Machine/Jesus, 7"
Elevator Action - Society, Society, CD
Elphaba - Any Land but This, CD
Empty Orchestra - Get Well Soon, CD
Escape Grace - II, CD
Escape the Fate - There's No Sympathy for the Dead, CD
Everyothers, the - Pink Sticky Lies, CDEP
Fast Product - Tall Coin, CDEP
Femme Fatality - Never Had a Daddy, CD
Foot Foot - Snaggle and Buck, CD
For the Worse - Non Compos Mentis Volume One, 7"
Forced March - Take Immediate Action, CD
Frantic - Attaque of the Grizzlie, LP
Frick the Cat/Fuzzy Wuz She - Split, 7"
Gracer - Voices Travel, CD
Hail Social - Warning Sign, 7"
Harvey Danger - Cream and Bastards Rise, 7"
Hawmay Troof - Dollar and Deed, 2xCD
Her Daily Obsession - S/T, CDEP
HjerteStop - Åårh, Fuck... Der er HjerteStop, 7"
Hobis/The Squints - Split, 7"
Holy Sons - Decline of the West, LP
Ghetto Ways - Party Down, 7"
Hold True - Invincible, 7"
I Am Loved - S/T, LP
Incarnated - Pleasure of Consumption, CD
Incredible Steel Erectors, the - Bull Muzika, CD
Johnny Rev - Hate Me Till Morning, CD
Juniper Sky - Don't Forget, CD
Jumpsuit - No Statue, 7"
Kid 606/Kid Commando - Div/orce Series Four, 7"
Kill the Fall/Hellephant - Preying on Giants, CD
Kitty and the Manges - Joey's Song, 7"
Kitty and the Kowalskis - Chinese Democracy, CD
Koenjihyakkei - Angherr Shisspa, CD
Larsson, Karl - Pale as Milk, CD

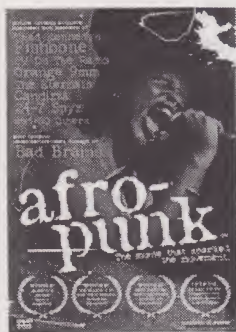
Little Ones, the - Sing Song, CDEP
(Lone) Wolf and Cub - May You Only See Sky, CD
Love Drunks, the - S/T, CD
Metalux & John Weise - Exoteric, CD
MacMinn, Mark - Hot World, CD
Mikaela's Fiend - We Can Driving Machine, CD
Miss Alex White and the Red Orchestra - S/T, CD
Modern Machines/If I Had a Hfi - Hot Nuggets, CD
Mountain Con - Sancho Panza, CD
Mouth of the Architect/Kenoma - Split, CD
Music Hates You - Send More Paramedics, CD
Neuron - Gleichschritt, CD
New Grenada - Modern Problems, CD
Nikola Telsa/ Except My Life - Split, CDEP
Nire - We All Shine On, CD
No Dogsbody - Dirty Bomb, CD
No Roses - Hell or High Water, CDEP
November Coming Fire - Dungeness, CD
Numbers & Adult - Numbers + Adult = This Seven Inch, 7"
Old Growth - S/T, CD
Order/Ultra Dolphins - Split 7"
Ovo - Mi Astenia, CD
Paik - Monster of the Absolute, CD
Paper Thin Stages - Progress Toward Ranks, CDEP
Peraino, Nick & Blue Moon Risin' - Noisy Picks and Humbars, CD
Pink Skull - Blast YR AKK, CDEP
Poo Poodles - Here Comes the Future... the Future is Now, CD
Press Gang, the - S/T, CDEP
Pretty Boy Thorson & the Falling Angels - S/T, 7"
Proudflesh - S/T, CD
Quack Quack - Mars, 7"
Raised Fist - Sound of the Republic, CD
Raising the Fawn - The Maginot Line, CD
Rat Byte/Concrete Facelift - Split, 7"
Red Devil - Threats & Warnings, CDEP
Reilly, Megan - Let Your Ghost Go, CD

Remain - As Sharp as Knives, 7"
Remnants, the - A Few Evenings With the Bastard, CD
Ricky Fitts - Wizard Lisp, CD
Sammies, the - S/T, CD
Scarlet - This Was Always Meant to Hurt You, CD
Scanners - Violence is Golden, CD
Searchingforchin/The Wolfnote - Split, 7"
Second Story Man - Red Glows Brighter, CD
Seconds, the - KRATITUDE, CD
Sensational Meets Kouhel - S/T, CD
Short Attention Span Theatre - Compilation, CD-R
Sick of it All - Death to Tyrants, CD
Society's Finest - And I, the Drunkards, CD
Spanish for 100 - Metric, CDEP
SS Kaliert - S/T, 7"
Streetlight Manifesto - Keasbey Nights, CD
TAEA - No Place Like Home, CD
Terminals, the - Takin' Care of Brooks, 7"
Touchers - Pretty Baby, CD
Tower of Rome - World War I, CD
Trashies, the - Taz Tattoo, 7"
Trashies - Life Sucks Trash Fuck, CD
Turn the Screw - S/T, 7"
Twilight Singers - Powder Burns, CD
Unsacred Hearts, the - In Defense of Fort Useless, CD
Vibration, the - Amarilla, CD
Walking Bicycles - Disconnected, LP
Wax Cannon - Someone in Madison is Praying for You (and it's Not Me), 2xCD
Westside Daredevils - Twilight Children, CD
Whitey Houston - S/T, 7"
Wilson, Joe - A Day in My Shoes, CD
X One Way X - S/T, LP
Yip Yip - Pro-Twelve Thinker, CD
Young Playthings, the - S/T, 7"
Zimmerman, Luke - Twilight Waltz, CD
V/A - Class Pride World Wide 3, CD

DVDS

About our reviews: We review independently produced DVDs. We don't limit our reviews to just music DVDs or just low-budget horror flicks, or any of the other indie rag review fare. We take on all comers (though we do reserve the right to not review some stuff for space reasons). What we mean is that we will take as much time writing about a new and amazing music DVD as we will a new foreign import or a re-release of a lost classic. The key is that it's made outside of the Hollywood system. Making a film, or a videozine, or documenting your band's tour, or anything else that ends up on a disc, is a tiny miracle, we know—so even if your review isn't the greatest, good on you for making it anyway.

This issue's reviewers: Dave Hofer (DH), Andrew Reynolds (AR). Edited by Daniel Sinker



Afro-Punk James Spooner, director

James Spooner's deeply personal documentary *Afro-Punk* looks at the experiences, shared and unique, of being a person of color in the overwhelmingly white world of punk and hardcore. Since its release to the festival/underground circuit in 2003, *Afro-Punk* has become somewhat of a cultural phenomenon, featured in magazines from this one to *Vibe*, spawning events, a website and message board, relevant to the punk scene and even more so to the black community. Even

though he is absent from the narrative, Spooner has confessed that *Afro-Punk* is his story, which gains strength as it is amplified through many voices, looks honestly, and often vulnerably, at issues surrounding race and identity. The result is a complex portrait of race as it intersects with punk, showing that even a culture steeped in progressive politics is not always inclusive, or wants to pretend that politics or punk transcend race, so 'we're all the same.' This is summed up halfway through, when Rachel Caidor says "It's really discouraging and it's really frustrating when you know that people are not trying to have a dialogue with you. People want to tokenize you, people want a multicultural vision of punk rock... but at the same time they don't want to deal with you as a person who experiences race." The film starts that dialogue with interviewees talking candidly about what its like to be the "only black person", how they found punk and the complications of being alienated both from their families and peers and from the very subculture they've chosen. There is a lot of pain inherent in these stories, but also humor and passion for what punk has meant to them—community, music, politics, DIY. *Afro-Punk* is made up mostly of quick-cut interviews whose subjects are democratically not identified until the credits, but include members of Fishbone, Dead Kennedys, Yaphett Koto, the Dirtbombs, TV on the Radio, 90 Day Men, and the Eternals, among others. Interspersed are four in-depth profiles that act almost as stepping stones in the search for identity, from a young woman in Orange County struggling, somewhat painfully, with conflicting messages and beliefs about race, a lonely Iowa City punk longing for community, a hardcore singer equally involved in afrocultural activism, and finally a woman whose identity as both a black woman and a punk have been integrated through a long personal struggle. *Afro-Punk*, both the documentary and the movement, is a call to arms, an invitation for punk to create a truly inclusive community and a support system for every Afro-Punk out there. —Katje Richstatter

Afropunk.com

The First Calgary Super 8 Filmmaking Challenge Victorvision Shorts

Making short films is like learning how to play the bagpipes. It's expensive, difficult and even if you get really good at it most people will never be that psyched about what you're doing. Of course, some short films aren't expensive, difficult or even a little bit good. "Untitled (Band), An Antal Grevens Intervention" by Thom van der Doef is TV footage of some band with the soundtrack replaced by a guy humming and making "crrrrsssh crrrrsssh," noises when the camera focuses on the drummer. Victorvision Shorts is distributing this 4-minute DVD, although I can't imagine why. "The Moschops" by Jim Trainor, also distributed by Victorvision, is more interesting but just barely. The movie is a 13-minute hand-drawn animation about the fictional, title animal. My copy of this stopped playing at the eight-minute mark so maybe something, anything happens in the last third although I wouldn't count on it.

For a different, better approach, there is "The 1st Calgary Super-8 Filmmaking Challenge." Each of the nine films on this DVD incorporates required elements (a cowboy, the number 14, a time-lapse shot.) Some of the results are whimsical, like "Goodbye Snowball," some are slasher gross, like "The Last Valentine," and some are epic haiku, like "14 Days." None are terrible and some are quite good.

Still, I bet it was way more fun to attend the screenings for these films than it was to sit in my apartment and watch the end product on DVD. That's not a slam against the Calgary Challenge and it may even explain the Victorvision releases. It can be magic to sit in the dark, with a crowd, watching a screen. It's not fair to these short films to put them in my house. If I come across someone playing bagpipes while I'm out, that could be kind of cool. Somebody brings bagpipes into my house? I'm not into it. —(AR) "Untitled (Band), An Antal Grevens Intervention" and "The Moschops" from Victorvision Shorts. No web or email but the phone number 312-493-9736 is on the discs. "The 1st Calgary Super 8 Filmmaking Challenge" from Fresh Dog Productions freshdog@gmail.com.

Mastodon – The Workhorse Chronicles

Atlanta-based Mastodon have been busting their

chops individually and collectively for years now (hence the title of the damn DVD), and this excellent release details each members' journey from other bands and towns to (basically) present day. Their story is presented in not only an informative manner, but also a humorous one. The fact that they don't take themselves too seriously probably has a lot to do with their success as musicians, and this DVD delivers plenty of guffaws. Also included are live performances of every song the band has released (save for "Elephant Man" and "Joseph Merrick" from *Remission* and *Leviathan*, respectively) as well as some old-ass performance footage with their old, five-member line-up, as well as footage from each of their old bands. Oddly absent, though, is any mention or footage of drummer Brann Dailor and bassist Bill Kelliher's time spent in Relapse chums Today is the Day (TITD). It would have been cool to see some in the Eyes of God-era TITD footage. Oh, well... this DVD is still incredibly well put together. (DH)

Relapse, PO Box 2060, Upper Darby, PA 19082, relapse.com

Refused – Refused are Fucking Dead

Though it's supposed to chronicle this seminal Swedish band's last days, *Refused are Fucking Dead* chooses instead to be an art film, filled with lots of scenery and shots of the band members getting ready to go... somewhere. The band came to a grinding halt in the middle of a basement show somewhere (it's not discussed if the final show was in America or overseas), but only after some members had vocalized their displeasure at being in the band for some reason (we never find out why). Yeah, it sucks that *Refused* broke up in the middle of a tour for their last record, but without knowing the real reasons why, it just comes across as another band that quit after playing some basement show. The DVD is also narrated at points by guitarist Kristofer Steen (though I only know that by reading the back of the DVD case), but just re-iterates what the other members say in their interviews. Overall, this is really, really boring. (DH)

Burning Heart, burningheart.com

COMICS



Lost Girls

Heralded in press materials as “without a doubt, the single most important graphic novel Top Shelf has ever published,” Alan Moore and Melinda Gebbie’s *Lost Girls* is, as made in a separate announcement, also the most expensive book Top Shelf has ever published, at a cost of about \$200,000. For a comic book.

Taken at face value—and given the \$75 cover price for the three hardcover, oversized, fantastically colored volumes that make up the *Lost Girls* storyline—this news might not hold much appeal for *Punk Planet* readers, who are far more accustomed to their smut coming—fast, dirty, and well-worn—from the hands of friends. Yet there’s been no better time in history for an independent comic-book publisher to take such a risk. The graphic novel boom of the last few months creates a definite, welcoming space for high-end comic books (however naked their protagonists may be). And the book trio, the product of a 15-year collaboration between Moore (best known for the chilling dystopias presented in *V for Vendetta*, *From Hell*, and *The Watchmen*) and Gebbie (*Wimmin’s Comix*, *Tomorrow Stories*), first published in various single-issue comic books in 1996, has been asked after ever since.

And sex sells. *Lost Girls* does it up, too, covering a frantic wealth of erotic themes: foot fetishists, shadow-play porn, incestual relations, lesbianism, a whole circus of sexual acrobatics, couplings between all characters in all imaginable combinations, rendered in pretty Victorian lines and salacious colors.

The stories are set in a Swiss hotel removed, like Switzerland itself, from worldly concerns like war and pollution. Pretty colored pencil renderings and nice, young, white girls in diaphanous gowns fill the big pages and the sex is all pleasurably portrayed and relatively stress-free. Rock-hard cocks barely concealed ‘neath military uniforms and French Maid outfits round out the stories that take place within this lush space, and the female protagonists (Wendy, Alice, and Dorothy) hail from such literary locales as Neverland, Wonderland, and Oz. In fact, *Lost Girls* harkens back to an era when sexuality could be idealized as pure and fantastical; when HIV and AIDS were unimaginable.

It’s all very lovely, but it’s not entirely sexy. Part of the problem is me: I don’t need or want my porn prettied up in a clever volume, nor legitimized by Moore’s acclaimed storytelling and Gebbie’s charming drawings. The veneer of respectability some may desire in their erotic art just does me no good in the pants-region. If, indeed, this collection is meant to be pornographic, meaning that it depicts explicit sexual material specifically to incur arousal—or even erotic, meaning artistically produced but still intended to excite—I cannot personally judge it a success.

It is, however, quite an ambitious project, with artistic merits that far outweigh its absence of raw passion. *Lost Girls* has been called a *Kama Sutra* for the comics-reading set, and the sheer volume(s) of couplings merits the title, as does the somber tone of sanctity that pervades each book. It’s an excellent gift for the wealthy connoisseur, your eccentric and sexually frustrated old aunt, the sex-shop owning matriarch, the art school dropout, or the stepfather you’ve always secretly been crushed out on. (OK, maybe not that last. Get him a really hot tie.) In other words, there are situations in which *Lost Girls* is the perfect solution to your social ailment.

That, ultimately, is why the books are not all that stimulating. Those of us for whom the *Kama Sutra* doesn’t hold some sort of illicit appeal—those of us, maybe, who grew bored of displaying our copies next to all our old college textbooks, as if we had conquered the lessons within it, too—probably won’t find *Lost Girls* attractive. —Anne Elizabeth Moore

Top Shelf Comix, www.topshelfcomix.com



Abandon the Old in Tokyo

The stories in Yoshihiro Tatsumi’s *Abandon the Old in Tokyo* are oppressively noisy—his panels crowded with *fwissshes*, *kerklangs*, and *kathunks*. There are sounds of someone flushing a toilet, someone washing dishes, an old woman snoring loudly, a factory worker turning the cranks of a heavy machine. “The noise of machines overtakes the world,” reflects this worker, “as everyone becomes isolated. The more people flock together, the more alienated they become.” It’s this very sense of alienation that causes Tatsumi’s ordinary, working class characters to commit desperate acts and demonstrate shocking behaviors. Soon the pedestrian sounds of the city are overwhelmed by more disturbing noises—the screams of a son discovering his dead mother, the muffled cries of a woman being choked to death.

This mode of comic storytelling is typical of *gekiga* (Japanese for “dramatic pictures”), a mature, realistic style pioneered by Tatsumi and his peers in the mid-20th century as an alternative to the manga of the day. Drawing skillfully in this form, Tatsumi conveys just how thin the line is between human and subhuman behavior—how, in the pursuit of everyday ambitions (or really, even minimal recognition), people can resort to depravity: a garbage collector abandons his elderly mother (who eventually commits suicide), all because he wants to impress a woman by showing her his “bachelor pad”; a struggling artist is deemed a pervert when caught covering a bathroom wall with dirty graffiti; an aging businessman gets down on his hands and knees and barks like a dog in hopes of rescuing his office from bankruptcy. In his introduction to *Abandon* author Koji Suzuki calls these “the very human accidents of the ego.”

It’s true that these events seem to creep up almost accidentally on the characters, just as they do the reader, and are even more jarring than that of *The Push Man*—the first volume in this multi-volume series (*Abandon* is second). The stories rely strongly on Tatsumi’s brilliant sense of pacing and perspective. In the title piece (in which the garbage collector son leaves his sick mother behind), the artist moves expertly from a scene of the garbage man heading off to work, to one of him watching a wrecking ball destroy a building, to a panel of him lost in a sea of people moving onto a city bus, to a scene of the bus edging through bumper-to-bumper traffic. The sense of urban decay and isolation speaks as loudly as the literal *krkrklak* and *beep-beep* of traffic, without feeling overstated.

Abandon the Old in Tokyo, edited by Adrian Tomine, promises to mark even more state-side recognition for Japanese cartooning legend Tatsumi, who will also complete some autobiographical material this year with the two-part release *A Drifting Life in Gekiga*, a project he’s been working on for 11 years. Amid shelves crowded with the typical manga, his bleak stories resonate loudly. —Laura Pearson

\$19.95, Yoshihiro Tatsumi, Drawn & Quarterly, PO Box 48056, Montreal, Quebec CANADA H2V 4S8, www.drawnandquarterly.com

About our reviews: We review independently produced comics. It's true. We do it for the love of reading them and for the love of writing about them. We don't care whether or not you buy them based on our reviews, but we will make every effort to give you what information we can about the comics we review that are available for sale. We review comics that are put out by the small publishing houses, comics that are put out by small art collectives, and comics that are put out by individuals. We'll try to review every comic we get in-house, but sometimes that's just not possible. Sorry.

This issue's reviewers: Chris Burkhalter (CB), Ari Charney (AC), Hatuey Diaz (HD), Christa Donner (CD), Lisa Groshong (LG), Anne Elizabeth Moore (AEM) Edited by Laura Pearson (LP)

Alien Weirdbots #1

To create *Weirdbots*, David Witt basically just reprinted his sketchbook. Containing two actual strips, at the beginning and end (which are funny), the rest of the book is devoted to random stuff that couldn't be less engaging. Witt draws well, but it takes a lot more than art skills to maintain a reader's interest. (HD)

No price given, David Witt, www.dwitt.com

Barrelhouse #2: Pus Drunk

Man, do confessional narratives bug me! For one, they all too often come with the presumption that the author and/or narrator now has that unfortunate part of his or her life all figured out. In the second *Barrelhouse* comic, we learn all about what a creep our possibly autobiographical narrator used to be when he worked a landscaping job at 17. "I was a particularly rotten and mean-spirited kid," we're told. Also, "I lacked the basic human qualities of compassion and understanding." Assisting this descriptive shorthand, artist Dug Belan draws the kid with evil eyes. This is another hazard of confession: the easy mistake of caricaturing past selves. In no time, *Barrelhouse* moves onto bragging about this nastiness, with quite a hoopla made of our protagonist's reportedly harrowing use of profanity, and here the details don't quite ring true. Was his mouth really so foul that his "convulsive stream of invective," described as "mostly unintelligible," compelled his once-patient crew leader to assault him? Those musta been some pretty wordy dirds! That's one more pratfall to be avoided in confessions: wearing past transgressions like badges. Succumbing to delusions of degenerate grandeur, our storyteller hurries through his account with only the most superficial detail, lining up regretted missteps like so many bottles of Jägermeister on a weekend warrior's mantle. Sure, there's remorse in the telling, but it's hard to hear it through the unbridled enthusiasm to talk about all these totally fucked-up things he can't believe he did back in the day. (CB)

\$2, Dug Belan and R. Lee, PO Box 1421, Oshkosh, WI 54903

Barry Pogo, Crime Scene Photographer, 2004 Funny Man, 2003

The Quiet Bird-Man, 2002

Jamie Tanner's anachronistic drawing style—more *Deadwood* than *Marjane Satrapi*—reveals itself occasionally through teeny little minicomics on various themes and events taking place in picturesque settings: a mine, a sitting-room, a murder scene, a Victorian hotel. All rendered in slightly off-putting woodcut-inspired panels that cause the uninitiated reader to ask, *Wait. When is this from?* Too, they involve a rotating cast of characters: a crime scene

photographer, a former stand-up comic, a scheming entrepreneur, a quiet bird-man. Yet these stories are released in some kind of nefarious order, according to some vast underlying plan of Tanner's he has yet to reveal to us—the unwitting consumer. It's not unlike the way any of his characters must feel. Each one finds himself or herself facing, on occasion, a harsh reality they have created by misplacing trust in the guidance of another. A murder, a multiple amputation, a suicide. And it all, somehow, for them, comes back to the Quiet Bird-Man, an unspeaking mythical figure that may well be omnipotent, if not all-controlling. Some day, the stories will align, and Tanner's scheme—and the Quiet Bird-Man's—will be revealed. By then it may be too late. We will have been ensnared in this odd world, a place slightly out of time and profoundly out of whack. And like his characters, we will never regret letting him lead our way. (AEM)

\$3, Jamie Tanner, www.jamietanner.com

Birds of the Baltic

In this, E.J. Barnes' "Ornithological Travelogue," the reader is transported to Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia—a region (I'll venture) not typically explored within American indie comics and maybe never (I'll venture further) explored via a study of local birds. The whole journey, which Barnes took with "her love" Brian in 2003, is rendered vividly in watercolor and pen. She's a thoughtful tour guide—exposing the reader to the architecture (island castles!), local customs (Midsummer's Eve!), and birds (White Wagtails!) of the Baltic countries with her keen eye for detail and careful sweep of the brush. (LP)

\$3.95, E.J. Barnes, Drowned Town Press, 174 College St. #2, Amherst, MA 01002-2329

Chimera

The sixth book in Fantagraphics' Ignatz series provides a rare look into the work of legendary artist Mattotti, whose lush work can be best described as following in the footsteps of such classic Italian modernist painters as Modigliani. In *Chimera*, he works in simple black ink, and the effect is stunning; the man is a master with a brush. As the story unfolds, his lines evolve from the most delicate imaginable to a veritable wilderness of brushwork, nary a spot of white left. It's the linework that tells the story, since the book is almost completely mute. A chimera is a mythical beast made up of various animal parts, but the word can also be used to describe an unrealistic dream or "castles in the sky." In fact, the story begins with children lying in fields staring at castles in the sky. As they chase them, they find themselves in adulthood, making various discoveries—some of them sweet, as with the first time they experience sex, but some of them

much darker, such as loss and violence. They discover death, which takes the shape of a giant black bird. The bird flies into a wilderness inhabited by a strange old man with a cane. He passes through the woods, and the deeper he goes, the darker it gets. At the very end of the woods we see a clearing, and beyond this, the beginnings of a field. It's a story so simple that a child could understand it, yet so much is left to the reader's interpretation, that the book demands multiple readings. With *Chimera*, Mattotti has created one of his most powerful works of art. (HD)

\$7.95, Mattotti, Fantagraphics Books/Coconino Press, 7563 Lake City Way NE, Seattle, WA 98115, fantagraphics.com, 1-56097-763-9

Combination Platter #1

This mostly lighthearted comics anthology features one gifted cartoonist, Manny Galan, whose three contributions far exceed that of his fellow contributors both in rendering and hilarity. His stylized stick figure stand-in featured in the comic "Hateful Things" fumes at all manner of life's aggravations. This vent session segues into an ad that parodies those old Charles Atlas ads that used to appear in the back of comic books, only instead of touting the benefits of extra muscle, this ad demands "Let me prove I can make you into a jerk!" and promises that "Dynamic tension makes you an asshole fast!" Some of these pieces are strictly bland affairs, such as the manga influenced teenybopper story "Starstruck" about a girl who discovers her television idol is a jerk, and "Ghosttown," which follows two little kids out west in search of their family. (AC)

No price given, www.combinationplatter.com

Couch Tag #3

Easily one of the most talented men working in self-publishing today—or, possibly, any day—Jesse Reklaw has been on my "talents to watch" list for years. I've expected regularly that he'll soon be "discovered" and granted big publishing deals, in which milieu he would, for a short time, create amazing, large-scale works that would possibly change the course of literature. It hasn't happened yet, thank god. Because not only might then his talents quickly become commodified and boring, but he would also probably find something more interesting to do than answer my incessant e-mails asking when the next issue of *Couch Tag* will be done; the series is Reklaw's magnum opus, to date. Usually a man of teeny clever booklets or one-off jokes shot through with a satisfying brilliance, or conversely long, extended projects such as his strip *Slow Wave*, *Couch Tag* is an autobiographical comic-book series. It is rapidly exploring an extremely clever narrative form that, for the first time, seems to allow Jesse to pursue many of

his diverse areas of interest simultaneously: realistic gouache (or watercolor?) paintings; self-referential humor; short blasts of story; long, compelling drama; collage; inside jokes of varieties both revealed to and hidden from the reader; and sharp moments of character revelation so compelling you wonder why you were laughing only moments before.

Couch Tag #3, "Our Fred Robinson Story," is the tale of a sort of made-up figure Jesse and his high-school pal Brandon obsessed over for years, until he grew into iconic status—literally, as they came to draw several comics starring Fred Robinson. Told through six chapters, each successively builds on the relationship between these three characters, which deepen and then destroy themselves several times. Slightly more clever, but still less satisfying than the previous installment of *Couch Tag*, "Thirteen Cats of My Childhood," something in the final chapter never quite feels resolved. Is it because we, too, have expected Fred Robinson to make an appearance? Or is it that all intense relationships that grow apart are inherently unsatisfactory? No matter: it is the writer's job to make us feel satisfied. If we fail to be satisfied by this installment of *Couch Tag*, no doubt we'll be that much more ready for the next one. (AEM)

\$4, Jesse Reklaw (and Brandon Macinnis), Self-published

Dolltopia

"Like *Animal Farm*, but with dolls!" proclaims the back-cover blurb on Abby Denson's *Dolltopia*, and if *Animal Farm* were a thinly veiled metaphor for teen-aged angst, it would be true. *Dolltopia* is, instead, a clever and well-written tale about those dolls who never quite fit into the lives they were created to lead and the land they invent to pursue their alternative lives. "Alternative" here is the essential word: these dolls want to cut their hair funny, escape military life, wear miniskirts, and explore homosexuality. It's all quite nicely done—except for the drawing, which is occasionally so underdeveloped you wish Denson had waited another year before completing the book. Yet with this much writing talent, you can't blame her for wanting to put this story out now. (AEM)

\$2, Abby Denson, PO Box 2247, Brooklyn, NY 11202-2477, abbycomic@prodigy.net

Don Flowers

With an introduction by Sergio Aragones and an afterword by Don Flowers Jr. this retrospective of Don Flowers' life and comics fills out Fantagraphics Books' self-proclaimed "popular pin-up series," which is not for everyone, especially not this reviewer. Sure, it's charming to examine these one-panel comics in light of the culture that spawned them, though typos in the introduction and a lack of context minimize any

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REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Chris Burkhalter (CB)

The Book Of Leviathan, Peter Blegvad. One of the best things I've bumped into in years, comic-wise or otherwise, is this terrific collection of Peter Blegvad's '90s serial for *The Independent*. In each installment, *Leviathan's* eponymous infant, assisted by a housecat (his own Hobbes) and a pink stuffed bunny, contemplates and describes the world around him.

Thing is, the world as he sees it is shaped and skewed by gaps of comprehension and experience (after all, he's just a baby), by a closer proximity to the unknowable (he several times refers to memories of the womb and even his own conception), and by a wide-eyed curiosity not yet dulled by familiarity, education, or even the English language (though the dense exchanges between baby Levi and the cat—however it is they're transmitted—are translated for our reading pleasure). Rigorously intellectual, *Leviathan* is filled to bursting with erudite references, puns, philosophical asides, and linguistic experiments. Routinely flipping styles, themes, and tones, and resorting to collage, quotation, and image appropriation, it's also enormously formally adventurous. In an interview for *Print*, Blegvad said that one goal of his work was "dissolving what I saw as the porous divide between 'fine art' and illustration." And dissolve it does, fusing Magritte to Groening. That each strip offers such mental workouts and takes such unexpected turns for newprint funnies is plenty impressive in and of itself. But that it's so consistently approachable and funny is simply amazing.

\$23.95, Overlook Press, ISBN 1-58567-098-7, www.leviathan.co.uk



REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Ari Charney (AC)

The Bloody Streets of Paris, Jacques Tardi. Few American comics enthusiasts might recall French cartoonist Jacques Tardi's work when it was serialized in Dark Horse Comics' ambitious early nineties anthology *Cheval Noir*. And if you're fortunate enough to ever check out the typically expansive graphic novels section in a bookstore in France or Quebec, you'll discover that English speakers have been deprived of all but a handful of selections from Tardi's prolific body of work. *The Bloody Streets of Paris* is Tardi's adaptation of Leo Malet's hardboiled detective novel featuring Nestor Burma, a character that Malet would eventually feature in over 35 novels. Burma has been described as France's answer to Raymond Chandler's Philip Marlowe. But what elevates this from being merely another detective story is the setting: Nazi occupied France in 1941. Indeed, at the outset of *The Bloody Streets* Burma is depicted in a POW camp awaiting demobilization. For the most part, however, the German presence in the story provides atmospheric tension as the characters resume some aspects of their pre-war lifestyles amidst the absurdity of wartime occupation. While Tardi's depiction of his fellow countrymen is almost caricaturistic (aggressively French noses seem to abound) the noirish grayscaled backgrounds featuring France's glorious architecture, café life, and period vehicles are unbelievably detailed. Though it's a bit difficult to grasp the details of the complicated plot at first, once the reader has acclimated to the storyline, this graphic novel is just as much of a page-turner as the best detective novel. One can only hope that this English translation proved successful enough to merit the translation of another Tardi masterpiece—his WWII epic *C'était la Guerre des Tranchées*.

\$17.95, Jacques Tardi & Leo Malet, www.komikwerks.com, ISBN 0-7434-7448-1



REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Anne Elizabeth Moore (AEM)

Twisted Sisters 2: Drawing the Line, Diane Noomin, Ed. The second in the *Twisted Sisters* series of anthologies (of which there were only really two, but which did spawn several like-minded imitators), the contents page of *Twisted Sisters 2: Drawing the Line* from 1995 is chock full of the female creators we hold in high regard today: Debbie Drechsler, Phoebe Gloeckner, Carol Lay. It also has the big names: Aline Kominsky-Crumb, Mary Fleener, Dame Darcy. And the highly regarded: Carol Swain,

Penny Moran Van Horn, Caryl Moiseiwitch. It is nothing less than a good and solid collection that set out to prove something, and it did. The sheer wealth of artistic styles rivals that of most well put-together anthologies these days, and the breadth of talent here remains impressive. While stories dwell a bit much in the trials and tribulations of being female and middle class, they are broken up by occasional forays into fantasy and mythology. The book was created to remind readers that Crumb and Clowes weren't the only alternative comics creators working—that girls could make comics, too—and, for a time, it did. Yet the collection's import has dwindled since 1995. Plenty of these women aren't working in the field anymore—most notably MK Brown, who for some reason I was totally fixated on in 1995, her hilarious dream comics spiking an interest in me in the entire medium—and no record exists as to where they went, or why.

If *Twisted Sisters* would really like to follow up on its promise to remind readers that Crumb and Clowes aren't the only alternative creators going, someone will track down the contributors to both the original anthologies and find out what they're doing now. Frankly speaking, we could still use the reminder.

\$24.95, Diane Noomin, www.komikwerks.com, ISBN 0-8781-6339-5

honor done to Flowers by this publication. The panels themselves are primary source documents from that imaginary simpler time white men so love to reminisce about. According to Don Flowers' work, it was a time when young men were right to run off at the altar since their beautiful brides were bound only to spend their paychecks, kvetch at them for bad male behavior, and spawn trouble-making kids. The images copied from newsprint carry the charm of their age, but most panels are crisply printed on white pages, emphasizing their antiquated messages. (DA)

\$19.95, Alex Chun, Jacob Covey and Don Flowers, Fantagraphics, www.fantagraphics.com

Drawn & Quarterly Showcase Three

The find of this *Drawn & Quarterly Showcase* is Genieve Elverum, whose figures and lines can only be described as chic, and whose emotionally (although not intellectually) satisfying stories are gripping, fantastical, and intriguingly nonsensical. Stories from Sammy Harkham and Matt Broersma—each choosing a different two-color scheme—are also presented, although these pale somewhat in comparison. Although it's a risky anthology that presents only three artists, the Elverum stories are alone worth the full cover price. (AEM)

\$14.95, Various Artists, *Drawn & Quarterly*, www.drawnand-quarterly.com, 1-89657-88-2

Fritz After Dark

A collection of more "deleted" material from *Luba Comics* and *Love and Rockets*, *Fritz After Dark* unfortunately dodges the simple truth that deleted material from a comic series should stay deleted. With the exception of one controversial television-show story-within-the-story, this comic—explaining how a motivational speaker, a 98-pound-weaking-cum-male model, and a lawyer all get, screw, and lose the giant-breasted, lispng Fritz over the course of 30 years—is not funny, not titillating, and not very interesting to look at. Die-hard fans of giant boobs and/or the *Luba* series are likely the only people who'll enjoy this backstory on *Luba's* "sexy half sister." (DA)

\$3.50, Gilbert Hernandez, Fantagraphics, www.fantagraphics.com

Head Chronicles, Vol. 1 Books #1-#4

Imagine a minicomic made up of random drawings of heads accompanied by mediocre, humorless poetry. Now imagine four of them. David Witt draws well, but since you're only looking at heads, it gets kinda boring after awhile. (HD)

No price given, David Witt, www.dwitt.com

Little Star

Depending on your perspective (and whether or not you have kids), Andi Watson's graphic novel *Little Star* will either provide a glimpse of the unparalleled privilege and universal awesomeness of parenthood or serve up a somewhat bleak picture of sleepless nights, unfulfilled career goals, and lots (and I do mean lots) of whining. Obviously, Watson wants us to see both sides. In one of *Little Star's* more trite moments (there are a few), the protagonist Simon—father of a little girl named Cassie (the eponymous star)—reflects on his role as dad: "It's a very long shopping list of contradictory emotions often experienced simultaneously... I'm a slob and chauffeur, teacher and pupil, nurse and sergeant major, dispenser of hugs, sympathy, ultimatums, and moral

guidance... Bum wiper and bather. Grump and storyteller." Elsewhere in the story, he relates fatherhood—and uh, life—to drifting through outer space ("a stray satellite floating through the heavens"). It's not an overwhelmingly original metaphor but still a flexible one, and actually carries more gravity (ha ha) than shopping lists. Indeed, the small science lessons—how the universe formed, how stars are born—are integrated seamlessly into the larger narrative. And what is that narrative exactly? Oh, how Artistic Young Dad is looking for his place in the mysterious nebulae that is fatherhood, while he and Successful Young Mom attempt to balance jobs, social lives, finances, and Cassie. My favorite character of the book is Simon's coworker friend Brian, a pony-tailed gamer dude who dotes over his *Star Wars* collectables the way proud parents dote over their mini-kids. (Everybody knows that guy!) Maybe *Little Star* won't put you on one side or the other of the parenthood fence (even given Cassie's incessant screaming for "Mummy!"). Maybe it'll simply function as a nice, relatively innocuous read before bedtime. And well, amid grim nightly news reports and Harper's back issues, I can always make space for that. (LP)

\$19.95, Andi Watson, Oni Press, 1305 SE Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. Suite A, Portland, OR 97214, www.onipress.com, www.andiandwatson.biz

Luba's Comics and Stories #6

The latest issue of *Luba's Comics* concentrates almost exclusively on *Luba* and her two sisters, Fritz and Petra. In true Hernandez fashion, the stories jump all over the place—the main topic seeming to be how each woman views herself. Each story ends with a line reminding the reader how close the sisters are to the day when they stop talking to each other, which gives the whole book a gloomy feel. Expect all the usual Hernandez trappings: giant boobs, kinky sex, and the occasional alien or two. This issue isn't going to convert any new people to the cult of *Love & Rockets*, but fans will eat it up. (HD)

\$3.50, Gilbert Hernandez, Fantagraphics Books, www.fantagraphics.com

Meow, Baby!

Every character by Jason—zombie, zombie prey, mummy, crow, devil crow, lady crow, caveman, cave-man prey, Elvis, etc.—is the same height and posture. Each wanders around voicelessly seeking his fate, doing a lot of escaping the police, eating humans (zombies only), knocking ladies over the head and dragging them home (cavemen, usually) and demonstrating that angels like sex whereas devils like Archie comics. The longer stories of *Meow, Baby!* transition from scene to scene via cinematographic tricks like zooming in and pulling back and adequately illustrate the redundancy of modern life. Later, three-panel strips demonstrate how modern life is pretty much exactly like ancient life. In spite of the near-total lack of female protagonists and the repetitive nature of the work, this collection merits a place in the bookshelf for those moments when you want to slip into something goofy after a harrowing day in the modern world. (DA)

\$16.95, Jason, Fantagraphics, www.fantagraphics.com

Plastic Farm #12: The Hanged-Man

A blizzard strands a small crowd in an airport bar, presenting a certain Chester the opportunity to share his bi-

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zarre life story, which involves psychological disorders, conspiracy, carnies, heightened perception, and four-eyed mouse-eared creatures with bowties. With eleven issues preceding this one, it's a little hard to get a handle on what's what in this dense story. Plastic Farm seems fairly interesting, but not quite fully realized. (CB)
\$2.95, Rafer Roberts, Plastic Farm Press, www.plasticfarm.com

Snake Pit Quarterly #14

One cool thing about indie publishing today is the way it's ordained the whole of experience as suitable material for writing and reading. Take, for example, the autobiographical *Snake Pit*, which deals in the minutiae of one punk's daily grind, presenting a three-panel strip of each day's highlights: go to work, eat a burrito, mess around on the Internet, go to band practice (in J Church), get wasted. While there's a winning, infectious personality to this life-in-outline-form comic, author Ben Snakepit doesn't turn himself into a character (as James Kochalka might). And although eventful things occasionally happen, Snakepit doesn't craft dramas from his days and nights (as Jeffrey Brown might). Unquestionably, there's a thoughtful process to the distillation of a day into three panels, but this is closer to straightforward journaling than storytelling. This seeming lack of writerly pretense is refreshing, but I warn that the trade-off is a somewhat rudderless comic that doesn't go out of its way to hook the reader. At the end of this issue, a three-page short deviates from this one-day/one-strip formula. Purposefully selected and recounted with anecdotal affect, I hafta say that this more conventional story was the issue's highlight. (CB)

\$2, Ben Snakepit, Young American Comics, youngamericancomics.com

The Squirrel Mother

In Megan Kelso's work, cartooning is a form of dance. This new collection of short stories, *The Squirrel Mother*, choreographs subtle tones along elegant lines for a full and exhausting dance card of stories. Although thankfully lacking the media savvy to proclaim the title herself, Kelso is among the very finest cartoonists working today. You won't regret taking this book out for a spin. (AEM)
\$16.95, Megan Kelso, Fantagraphics, www.fantagraphics.com, 1-56097-746-9

Sucker Punch #1

This from the first page: "This isn't one of those self-obsessed, nostalgic yarns of a navel-gazing milquetoast who laments for the sunnier days of his lost youth." Not quite, but not far off either. Protagonist Clarence Bathwater is a young man of insight, education, and promise... and a navel-gazing milquetoast, if we're putting our cards on the table. His ardent quest to uncover the universe's great *what-does-it-all-mean?* is thwarted by pal Frieda—the sassy girl everybody lusts after, but who prefers the company of our hapless hero, and denizen of the corner, Harry, who, for all intents and purposes, is Jason Mewes. Pursuing employment-free restlessness over coffee, beer, and cigarettes, *Sucker Punch*'s characters labor through the sort of long-expired witty roundtables that still haunt Jonathan Silverman's sleepless nights. Author Mark Jason Robards isn't bad at this kind of humor, but he adds nothing new or exceptional to the strip-mined subgenre. (CB)

\$3, Mark Jason Robards, Shortpants Press, www.shortpantspress.com

Super Spy Weekly

It looks like someone's figured out that the fancy production of Matt Kindt's rather humdrum stories of European spydom in the early 20th century doesn't overcome his typos and repetition, because his books are marked down 50 percent at present. Kindt aims for emotional connection via overwrought imaginings of what it was like to grow up in a simpler wartime when problems were solved with bullets and cyanide pills and no one was surprised when the end came for them. There is some attraction to the muted watercolors and vellum flysheet overprinted with maps, and even some comfort in the simplicity of these stories, but *Super Spy Weekly* lacks sufficient energy or intrigue to keep the reader engaged. (DA)

Matt Kindt, Top Shelf Productions

Surrogates #4 & 5

Surrogates is a five-issue sci-fi detective mini-series, the centerpiece of which is an inventive vision of one possible path that the nascent field of cybernetics could one day assume: citizens in the year 2054 can customize idealized robotic versions of themselves to fulfill every aspect of their real-world lives. They participate in the life of their fully humanistic Surrogate versions of themselves through a virtual reality link that apparently is fully realized enough to provide the full range of real-world stimuli. The actual human owners of these Surrogates idle away in the safety and comfort of their homes, content to participate in their perfect "lives" remotely. A series of surprisingly polished full-page ads for the Surrogates complement the story. One two-page advertorial touts all of the customizable features for the Surrogates, including a "self-cleaning abdominal reservoir" and a "Forecast Manager" that maintains preset climactic conditions no matter what the actual weather might be. While all of this is interesting to contemplate, the storyline itself is a bit tired. A world-weary detective who's grown skeptical of all this technology finds himself mired in a case that requires him to delve into the very company responsible for creating all of the Surrogates. In fact, the plot is not that far removed from the movie adaptation of Isaac Asimov's *I, Robot*. Fortunately, the artwork is rendered skillfully enough to keep the shortcomings of the story from falling flat. The drab earthtones that saturate the impressionistic sketches of the characters definitely convey the right amount of bleakness for the futuristic dystopia. All five issues of this mini-series will eventually be collected in a single volume that's slated to be published in July. (AC)

\$2.95, Robert Venditti & Brett Weldele, Top Shelf Productions, www.topshelfcomix.com

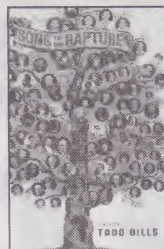
Where is My Soup? #1

It's hard to tell why it took two people to create this photocopied comic about the various and weird adventures of a toll booth operator who holds conversations with a bottle of bleach he calls Chee'z Fry, but such is the creative process. Oh and there is no soup, but there is a talking cup of English Breakfast tea. (DA)

\$1 or stamps or trade, Anton and Al, akropp@gmail.com or al.charity@gmail.com

BOOKS

Edited by Joe Meno



Sons of the Rapture

Todd Dills

Featherproof Books

In a nation governed by a marionette president and century-old senators, an eccentric father rounds up his cattle for a cross-country motorcycle ride. He is searching for his runaway son who is hiding in Chicago, soaking the wounds of a traumatizing past in whiskey. Between father and son is a motley crew of characters—from a pop-gun wielding cowboy to a sexually-confused, tiara-wearing trumpeter—all with rich voices and their own disturbing stories to tell. Told through the varying perspectives of this distinct cast, Dills captures in his first novel the spirit of America after two hundred years of sloppy brewing: completely detached, emotionally devoid, morally skewed, and full of hopeless youth with nowhere to turn for comfort but the warm embrace of the bottle. Wildly entertaining, technically astounding, and moving to the last, *Sons of the Rapture* roots itself deep in a revolutionary past and cannot be pulled out without a gritty, honest chunk of America still attached. —Keith Potempa

Silverthought: Ignition

Various authors, edited by Paul Hughes

Silverthought Press

Silverthought: Ignition is a killer collection of twenty-one short stories written by various authors working in a genre called "speculative fiction." That's basically a fancy term for "horror/sci-fi," if you ask me, and it's ultimately unnecessary to try to put a respectable face on tales as dark, weird, and entertaining as these. Given that they're written well, and the reader has a vivid imagination, horror stories told via the written word can be a million times more disturbing than any gore flick gag that goes "boo." When the tale that's being spun starts rattling around in your mind, drudging up all your personal hang-ups and "what ifs," a sense of fear and wonder really becomes palpable. The majority of the stories in *Silverthought: Ignition* work that angle well. Like the best horror/sci-fi, there's a heavy socio-political commentary running through most of the authors' work. America's an over-sexed, over-medicated, booze swilling, violent nation, and these stories are a funhouse mirror reflection of that. Midnight marauders battle robots at a post-apocalyptic country club; a hen-pecked husband slaughters his entire family; and a man finally removes his super power sunglasses to reveal the dead, maggot infested corpse he's been, unknowingly, having sex with. That's right folks, this is way-out stuff, not for the faint of heart. —Ari M. Joffe

The Logic of a Rose

Billy Lombardo

BkMk Press

To find an appreciation for life is to read Billy Lombardo's *The Logic of a Rose*. This collection of short stories is a tribute to life itself and the simple things that make it worth living. Billy shares with you stories of Petey Bellapini, and his life in Bridgeport, a South Side neighborhood of Chicago. But you will not find the usual stories of bad neighborhoods and hard times that would beg for your sympathy. Instead you are able to enjoy many of the good times that Petey

experiences, as you watch him grow up in Bridgeport. Grabbing your interest tight, this book uses an array of unique characters and stories within stories to hold onto you as you flow through each one. The beautiful imagery pulls you into this world even deeper. Whether witnessing Petey's protection of a new sidewalk or survival of a burning apartment, you cannot help but be sucked in by this wonderful kid and everything he does. With a first line like, "It is true that I hated Tucker Norton. But I didn't mean to crush his thumb," it is impossible not to keep reading and watch Petey experience life. Read this book to find your spirit lifted. —Jared Brenner

Classified: How to Stop Hiding Your Privilege and Use It for Social Change

Karen Pittelman // Illustrations by Molly Hein
Soft Skull Press

For those of us who live with privilege—and in the first world, virtually all of us do—the world of activism can be daunting for even the most committed proponent of social change. *Classified* is an informative—at times hilarious—call to action for those whose privilege gets in the way of progressive action, or whose bank balance makes social activism feel like hypocrisy. Thorough, yet easy-to-read, *Classified* uses straightforward, honest examinations of institutional and societal privilege, to deliver in the gentlest, kindest way possible the difficult truth: yes, you do have unfair advantages and no, you don't have to hate yourself for it. This common-sense guide has tips on the every aspect of getting over being privileged, from the most abstract (dealing with the fear of being seen as "the enemy") to the most tangible (financial planning for giving). Surprisingly free of rhetoric, *Classified* uses its own language, neither academic nor condescending, to address the complicated business of privilege with tact. Chaotically fun illustrations and moving personal stories engage the reader and encourage reflection without resentment. An excellent list of resources—many of them independently published!—is included.

—Penelope McKimm

ZINES



Paping #14

Residing between comic, zine, and experimental art project, *Paping* is difficult to classify. Sure, there are sequential panels laid out in a comic like style, yet there are other visual and written approaches implemented as well. Points go immediately to the execution: bound by shoelace between two pieces of

wood hand-burned with images individual to each copy, *Paping* demonstrates a staggering amount of talent and effort. Luckily, zine creator John Mejias has some talented friends to help him out.

Issue #14 is titled "We All Scream for Silkscreen," and follows through with its promise—most of the edition silkscreened by hand with multiple passes, revealing the intricacies of each individual print. Old magazine pages are reconditioned, with vibrant abstract art that jumps off the page in so many colors it will lead anyone who's dabbled in silkscreening to wonder just how many hours Mejias spent on the project.

The edition is not all style with little substance, however; Mejias's own contribution proves to be the most resonant of the works, overwhelming with initial wonder and then hitting with deeper significance. A high school art teacher in New York City, Mejias contrasts the rhetoric of standardized testing with the lack of chairs in his classroom in his piece, demonstrating the gulf between election-year "No Child Left Behind" talk and the ignored and basic practical needs of schoolteachers. While some of the other pieces come off as well-executed stylistic exercises, Mejias' piece grounds the entire zine in the harsh realities of public school funding. To do so in such a remarkably artful book makes the contrast all the more stark, as you realize all the lost potential by cutbacks in funding for art and music classes.

Other pieces are equally impressive, if somewhat abstract in their appeal. Sean McCarthy's unusual screenprint resembles topographical maps at first glance, but with the printed transparency overlays, appears to be two worm-like creatures in battle. Is all of it legible or understandable? Not at all, but *Paping* so draws you into its craft that you can't help to gaze at each page, trying to detect the meaning. On a whole, the book is transfixing. Each page might inspire you to rip it out and put it in a frame—it's that artistically impressive—but you don't dare remove a part from its larger whole. (PMD)

\$25, New York, NY, www.paping.org

Button Masher #1

The inaugural issue of an "ongoing fiction story," *Button Masher* hits a little too close to home for this ex-Jersey, ex-college boy: a college student is lonely, annoyed with his roommate, confused about his relationship with his maybe-girlfriend and misses the camaraderie of his old friends and the indie/punk-rock scene (apparently his college friends are lame). His solution is an (ill-advised) spur-of-the-moment move back home, without telling his maybe-girlfriend where he's headed. After unpacking, he wanders around Hoboken and wallows in nostalgia until she finds him (which pretty much answers the "is she or isn't she" question in my mind), at which point they brighten each other's day with funny stories. The first person narrative is pretty intimate, and I appreciate the Fugazi reference ("Episode 1 is not a fuck you episode,"—I guess he'll save that episode for later on). While Joe definitely writes from experience here, it's unclear how much of this is autobiographical and much is fictional. (AM)

Please e-mail for price, "interesting trades considered," Joe Evans, JoeWSTK@yahoo.com

Crushpuppy

Crushpuppy is made up of various love letters addressed to everyone and everything from actual past lovers to the Internet. It appeals to the voyeuristic characteristic in all of us—the desire to relate to others by secretly entering their lives. Mostly, the letters are of the cute, sardonic sort, which can be both funny and immature. Sarah explains that *Crushpuppy* was a 24-hour effort. I like the premise of the zine but wish she would have exposed more in her letters, whether writing in a tongue-in-cheek style or with complete sincerity. She doesn't give enough away. (AJA)

\$1 ppd, Sarah R., PO Box 816, N. Tazewell, VA 24630, piratesarah@gmail.com

Doris #23

Hating *Doris* is like saying you hate eating food. Maybe that's a bit rash. OK then: hating *Doris* is like saying you hate pizza. After all, it's arguably one of the best personal zines out there, and its creator, Cindy, writes with a rare universal appeal. If one cannot relate, one

can at least be fascinated—not in the events of her life, but in her observations. They are astute, lack pretension, and often offer painful insights about humanity. I make the assumption that it must be difficult to be Cindy, always thinking that intensely. Is it courageous or is it a curse? I guess that's really up to perception. In this 23rd issue, we read about pigs with fangs, menstrual extraction, urban gold mining, walking alone in strange neighborhoods, and, of course, friendships and love. (VC)

\$1.50, Cindy Ovenrack, PO Box 1734, Asheville, NC 28802

The East Village Inky #30

Written by savvy New York-mom Ayun Halliday, this issue of *Inky* chronicles her attempts at broadening the horizons of her two children over the course of the summer months (or, as she terms it, turning into "Hardcore Enrichment Mom"). It is a tiny zine, but every single nook is packed with handwritten anecdotes, short cartoons, and smart dialogue. Museums are tackled, whining is dealt with, and there's even a special illustrated section on beards. Though the handwriting can be tedious to decipher—especially when discussing a small, communal teddy bear named CoCo—overall, this is a fantastic window into the life of a hilarious 40-something who still takes obvious pride in putting together such a well-crafted zine. (SBM)

\$3, Ayun Halliday, PO Box 22754, Brooklyn, NY, 11202, www.ayunhalliday.com, ayun@ayunhalliday.com

Found on Road Dead

This handmade poetry chapbook in zine form is worth seeking out just to see the insane paper ephemera cluttering its pages. The back cover was actually cut from a box of Schlitz, and the first few pages are ads for car dealerships cut from newspapers. Another random page features a Mexican loteria card stapled in for creepy effect, and the whole thing is bound together with HVAC tape. The poetry itself is a self-consciously redneck version of the sort of paeans to hard living that Bukowski was best known for. There's quite a bit of beer swilling, a bit of lechin', some hot sauce, and a little bit of backwoods country cookin'. And just when the reader might be tempted to con-

About our reviews: We make every attempt to review all the zines (or magazines) we receive, as long as they are released independently. However, despite our best efforts, not every zine ends up in here for a myriad of reasons. The zines to the left on the opening page—the ones with the magazine cover reproduced—are designated as “lead” reviews by the reviewer. That means it’s a zine that really stands out for them this time around. But it certainly doesn’t mean that the many other zines reviewed aren’t good. Finally, if a reviewer doesn’t like your zine, it’s just one person’s opinion, so don’t freak out. We’re sure you put a good deal of work into your project and that alone is worth some congratulations!

This issue’s reviewers are: Abbie Amadio (AJA), Joe Biel (JB), Vincent Chung (VC), Andrew Mall (AM), Sarah Moody (SBM) Edited by Laura Pearson

clude that this is a faux redneck persona that’s being tried on by some bespectacled post-collegiate 20something, the photo on the bio page reveals the poet to look very much like his poetry: he’s standing without his shirt on in a weedy backyard, his slight middle-aged paunch hanging over his undone jeans, and his long hair tucked under a cowboy hat. In fact, it turns out that Massey is a well-regarded Texas cult figure and the self-proclaimed “hardcore poet of cowtown.” (AC)

No price given, William Bryan Massey III, PO Box, 2044, Ft. Worth, TX 76113, www.anti-heroart.com

Freezer Burn #4

It’s hard to believe that any of the scenesters in the editor’s hometown would actually take umbrage at the harmless contents of this zine. And yet, the editor devotes this issue’s opening statement to addressing the fact that a number of his peers were sufficiently offended by his commentary in a previous issue to denounce him as “counterproductive to the scene.” After declaring that the real point of his zine is “wacky toons and frontal nudity,” he provides just that, though with more of the former than the latter. The editor manages to stuff this brief issue with just enough comic strips, gag panels, and scribbles to amuse without taxing the reader’s indulgence. Though he takes a few political and cultural jabs at such easy targets as Bill O’Reilly and American consumerism, his best work is clearly inspired by his experiences going to shows. There’s the expressionistic sketch of a typical “basement audience,” and then there’s another panel portraying a punk rocker with face scrunched, and neck veins bulging, belting out the lyric “Life is a fkkking tar pit!!!!” But the full-page depiction of the various participants in a punk-rock show, replete with numerous thought bubbles betraying the secret squeamishness of mohawked guitarists and skinhead audience members, is the true centerpiece of this issue. (AC)

\$1, Bens, 4131 Hickory Hill Dr., St. Louis, MO 63129, driedgum@aol.com

The Gospel of Screenprinting

The Gospel Of Screenprinting holds true to its title. Brad is knowledgeable about the process and pres-

ents the how-tos of screenprinting in a well-written, understandable, and clear manner. He includes a troubleshooting section, a run-down of supplies, instructions for making your own press, and general tips. Breaking down the process into sections and avoiding the pitfall of too much detail, Brad has put together a very useful guide on the subject. (AJA)

\$6, Brad W., 617 E 49th St, Savannah, GA 31405, tenfortyfivepress.com, brad@tenfortyfivepress.com

I Hate This Part Of Texas #5

Zinester John Gerken maintains a level-headedness not often found in underground publishing. He is able to keep life itself in perspective and still write entertaining, thoughtful stories. The pieced-together writings of *I Hate This Part Of Texas* are at their core philosophical, asking questions of life and death. Gerken’s writing runs the gamut of emotions. His poetry-like entries are at once empathetic, nostalgic, angry, and appreciative of life’s moments. (AJA)

\$3 ppd, Microcosm Publishing, PO Box 14332, Portland, OR 97293, www.microcosmpublishing.com

Jelly Cake Vol. 1, #1

Jelly Cake reads like a carnival: lots of different articles to explore, each with its own size, humor, and creativity. Benjamin’s populated his zine with NYC hipsters who have creative names (Maritza, Grasmere, Hennepin, Huguénot), inside jokes, and references to experiences outside the scope of the zine. At times I felt that I was eavesdropping on a private group blog without any additional context. For this reason, it was hard getting into the stories. Why do I care how Maritza and Hennepin met when all I know about either of them is that Maritza found two slices of cold French toast at a bus stop, and Hennepin’s ex-girlfriend is crazy? Why is it a big deal that Huguénot has resurfaced after a few years to contribute a piece in which he harasses a disabled woman in a motorized wheelchair by refusing to let her pass on the sidewalk? Simple computer illustrations abound, accompanying accounts of random incidents in the lives of Benjamin’s characters. Taken as a whole, Jelly Cake lacks cohesiveness; taken as a collection of snapshots of the lives of unfamiliar characters, it makes slightly more sense. Lastly, why produce a

zine without including any contact info? (AM)

\$1.50, Benjamin Castle, [No contact info. given]

Jelly Cake #2

I’ve read this issue of Jelly Cake twice and can’t claim that I understand it. The zine seems to be a set of inside jokes that would probably require 10 thorough reads to begin to make sense of, and while I can tell the contributors are trying to be funny here in convoluted and eccentric ways, I still can’t begin to laugh at it. Overall, Jelly Cake has the general feeling of three to four authors taking jabs at each other. This would be good reading if you have as much time on your hands as these folks seem to. (JB)

[No price given, no contact info. given]

Junk Pirate #11

The idea behind *Junk Pirate* is pretty straightforward, as it involves author/collector Pete Glover scrounging up old images and scrapping them together in zine form. However, the images that he comes up with are fantastic—ranging from flag imagery to extra button envelopes to old diagrams and even an advertisement for a female urinal. To place these disparate images side-by-side adds to a general feeling of absurdity, and each page looks as though it could be used as part of a show poster. The clean layout of *Junk Pirate* is appealing, and though it’s a slim issue, there’s plenty inside to make it well worth the \$1 price tag. I’m not sure if this is typical fare, but my issue included a card from the game Clue (for the wrench, to be specific). Glover has designs on putting out a *Junk Pirate* book in the near future, but until that materializes, this issue should tide you over. (SBM)

\$1, Pete Glover, PO Box 3223, Oakland, CA 94609, www.junkpirate.com

Letter X, Vol. 1

This issue of the full-size literary zine *Letter X* features poetry and narrative writing that is more cohesive and relatable than the entries in the previous issue. Both the short stories and poetry are more focused—zeroing in on specific incidences, however trivial or wrought with nostalgia—and relaying them in a creative, truthful way. It is refreshing to read writing that abandons the modern tendency of de-

constructing the narrative as an attempt at creativity. (AJA)

[No price given]. Letter X, 3518 Fremont Ave N #526, Seattle, WA 98103, letterXmag@hotmail.com

Loserdom #19

A cool DIY-themed zine from Ireland about a bike tour through the United Kingdom, *Loserdom* contains numerous photographs and personal accounts, including a lament for the loss of Red Ink, Dublin’s DIY zine shoppe. I enjoyed the detailed illustrations and the thoughtful assessment of how cycling is going downhill in Dublin, what with a great deal of bike thefts, harsh treatment on the roads, poor attendance at Critical Mass rides, and bike lanes being used as parking lanes. Other *Loserdom* features include interviews with editors of old Irish zines, a book review, an interview with peace activist Ciaran O’Reilly, and some zine reviews. A really solid stab here that kept me excitedly turning pages. (JB)

\$4, Anto 9 Borron PL Drumcondra, Dublin 9 Ireland

Love, Chicago #4

To act as a city guide for a place as sprawling as Chicago seems an impossible feat for an 8x10” quarterly. But *Love, Chicago* attempts to cover the bases, containing diverse articles that range from roller girls to burlesque shows, and interviews from local luminaries such as Christen Carter (of Busy Beaver Buttons) and filmmaker Rusty Nails. The reviews and comics sections remain the most interesting features, though; a fantastic page by Grant Reynolds is a big highlight. However, it is difficult to ascertain the zine’s demographic when sections such as “I Shop Chicago” and “Kiddie City,” pop up, as it’s hard to get past the overt product placement and wonder if they couldn’t fill the same space with something more relevant. (SBM)

\$5, Erica Burke, 3042 N. Christina Ave. Unit 2, Chicago, IL, 60618, www.lovechicago.org, editorial@lovechicago.org

The Molten Rectangle #1

While Chicago isn’t primarily known as a film city (at least not since the Brat Pack heyday), it does have a famous reputation for film appreciation. As the home of Ebert & Roeper, the legendary Facets library,

and a rich selection of festivals, theaters, and rental outposts. Chicago is a healthy place for film buffs to flex. This zine compiles short essays written by various Chicago film fanatics (and one Brooklyn fanatic) on a huge spectrum of topics—from dissecting Michelangelo Antonioni's treatment of women, to (un)defining Tokyo Shock (by the owner of an incredible rental store called Odd Obsession), to discussing hypnosis techniques in Cammell and Roeg's *Performance*, to reviewing *Keep the River on Your Right: A Modern Cannibal Tale*, and more (including a collaborative scene response piece on *The Wages of Fear*). While addressing interesting subjects, the essays are criminally brief, resulting in half-baked ideas and a general sense of incompleteness. It's like reading a collection of prologues or a series of first paragraphs. The editor does regrettably address this and takes the fall, so let's hope with #2, he gives his critics ample space to justify their arguments. (VC)

[No price given, no contact info. given... So it's probably harder to find than the *Saló Criterion* DVD. What would you expect from a bunch of film elitists?]

Mutate Zine #10

Mutate covers a range of topics, but most have a common thread: issues of sexuality—whether celiacy, pornography, gender identity, or pro-choice activism. Some of the articles are serious—such as the author's recollection of filing “conscientiousness objector” status (the one piece not sexuality-oriented) and his accounts of accompanying women entering abortion clinics. Other writings are on the lighter side, from sexy cartoon characters to suggestions for queer-indicator codes to replace ones like the ear-ring-worn-in-left-ear. (AJA)
Free, *Mutate Zine*, 2935 N. Fratney, Milwaukee, WI 53212, www.mutatezine.com, milo@mutatezine.com

No Snow Here #10

This issue of Nadia's per-zine reads like a love letter—or perhaps an advice column—to her former self. She's nostalgic for Detroit, her homebase for 10 years, but not in some disingenuous hipster way. It's more like missing something you know is no good for you but that you love anyway. She recognizes her former self in a friend's party-hard roommate who's fully exploring life, if a bit recklessly. Issues like the (in)sincerity of friends and the danger of STDs don't matter much when the only future you see for yourself is trying to survive tomorrow morning's hangover. But Nadia's come a long way since then: she's grown more secure in herself, she's confident enough in her relationship that she files a complaint against a gynecologist while being treated for HPV, and she's confident enough with herself that she challenges anyone—even old friends—whose language and behavior reveal racial/sexual biases and perpetuate oppression. This is the first issue she's produced entirely on a computer, and some pages suffer from her lack of experience (hint: Photoshop is not a layout program), but overall this is a well thought-out and

well-produced zine. You'll have to e-mail her if you want a copy. (AM)

[No price given], Nadia, no.snow.here@gmail.com

No Snow Here #9

Despite what the minimal cover art might imply, the content of *No Snow Here* is conflicted at best. Drawing on old clichés, author Nadia runs through her personal history in the form of anecdotes and rants, all of which generally stay within the realm of abuse, racism, depression, sexual promiscuity and a whole host of insecurities. While the introduction claims that she doesn't want to divulge all of her secrets (presumably because “friends of friends of friends” might treat her differently), the stories inside do just that. Such is the nature of most personal zines, but when the writing itself can't be held up next to the topics being addressed, it quickly turns into something entirely tiresome. Perhaps her writing style will eventually mature, but in the meantime, it will have to reach far past the superficial state it is currently enjoying to make anyone truly care. (SBM)

[No price given], Nadia, www.myspace.com/snowhere, no.snow.here@gmail.com

Pressed Between the Pages #1

Though this chapbook of poetry and prose is fairly brief, it nevertheless has several examples of something that occurs all too infrequently in the zine world: decent poetry. In his introduction, the editor makes it sound as if he casually dashed off some of his poems the week before. It's entirely possible that this is the case, but his poems suggest rather more thought and craft than he admits to. One poem encapsulates the longing of a long-distance romance: “Lost for hours in songs that I can't/but really want to unfurl/pretending I too can relate to every line/about a boy and a girl.” Even more poignant is an elegy to the editor's mother that is likely the only instance of zine poetry that is capable of stirring true emotion. This zine is well worth seeking out for these two poems alone, and it will be interesting to see how this writer develops in the years to come. (AC)

\$1 + 2 stamps, Alan Lastufka, PO Box 254, Manhattan, IL 60442, alan@falofautumn.com

Rocks and Blows #2

This second issue from a recovering junky apparently picks up where the first issue left off: deep in the mire of drug addiction. There are four stories here: pawning the last thing of value in the apartment—an old, beat-up TV—for \$4 that goes to cab fare; the tragedy of jettisoning addict friends, no matter how good they are, after cleaning up; waking up next to the totally hot, totally unreachable man-eating scenester (every scene has at least one) after a punk show on Valentine's Day and ending the night drunk and depressed; and almost getting arrested after a big drug score. The writing is clear, pointed, and completely ambivalent; while David doesn't glorify his past as an addict, he also doesn't offer much in terms of mor-

alizing or imparting lessons learned through his experiences. I'm left wondering whether he truly feels bad about abandoning his old junky friends or if he misses the instinct that causes one to pawn the last remaining thing of value one possesses. He plays the subservient citizen to the power-hungry cops, but it's hard to be sympathetic with his plight when his narrative doesn't take into account the larger socially destructive forces of addiction that ultimately grant the police their power. (AM)

\$1, David Frank, 1002 W. Montrose Box 194, Chicago, IL 60613, rocks_and_blows@yahoo.com

Scissor Socket Shocker #1

A mishmash of features ranging from photography, band interviews, articles, and rants to comics, poetry, and zine/record reviews, *Scissor Socket Shocker* contains entries that are funny and entertaining, even though I wouldn't classify any of them as “high art” in any sense. Still, I caught myself getting pulled into writings about seemingly inane topics and chuckling out loud. Is this a statement of how I view myself? Or are letters to Scott Bakula, a story about being single at 39, and the satanic nature of the Smurfs much more amusing than I formerly believed? (JB)

Donations, J Farley PO Box 471159 Fort Worth, TX 76147

Skyscraper #21

Let's say a record collector takes a trip to an exotic locale, determined to find out the true essence of Ethiopiques. He spends five years immersed in indigenous cultures, only to come back completely detached from the fringe music trends of a “civilized” society. He asks, “Yo, so what did I miss during my quest?” So you give ‘em a *Skyscraper*. Why? Because the zine not only covers the bases, but it also digs a little deeper with in-depth interviews and longish reviews, effective at acclimating even the most out-of-touch music fan to the latest independent artists. This issue covers Dungen, Mogwai, Jon Langford, Pearls and Brass, Tristeza, Clorox Girls, Rah Bras, Das Oath, Threadbare, Hefner, and oodles of others. (VC)

\$5 to *Skyscraper Magazine*, PO Box 4432, Boulder, CO 80306, www.skyscrapermagazine.com

Somnambulist #7

A document about Martha kicking the cigarette habit, *Somnambulist* includes stories and interviews with her family members about their smoking histories. We get a little sketch of each person, as well as his or her personal testimony about smoking. Elders ponder why all of their kids smoke and how to make them stop. This zine functions as a great, informal case study of the psychology of smoking, presenting a range of perspectives. (JB)

\$3, Martha Grover, PO Box 14871 Portland, OR 97293

Suggest-I-Vision

The editors of this ambitious glossy arts zine out of UC Davis are hoping to inspire readers to remove the trappings of commerce from their artistic endeavors. Unfortunately, too much of this zine's content, partic-

ularly the poetic efforts, are mired by the tediousness of their quasi-revolutionary sentiments. On the other hand, much of the photography is well-composed, and, at times, striking. An essay decrying academia's obsession with postmodern theory is a welcome salvo against academic complacency. An interview with the writer and professor Joe Wenderoth is fascinating because, although the tone of the article is respectful, Wenderoth still manages to come across as an unintentionally hilarious caricature of the fauxtortured writer. For instance, Wenderoth decides that the interview should take place at an IHOP because it's “the perfect place to sit and talk, its seedy, greasy-smelling air just feels right.” (AC)

[No price given], Edited by Arjuna Neuman, arjuna4king@yahoo.co.uk

Tazewell's Favorite Eccentric #4

Sarah's per-zine jumps from topic to topic, but the underlying theme is one of survival and understanding. She struggles in her relationship with her mother, whose former drug addiction had a terrible impact on her childhood (including being sexually assaulted, which she discusses here). Sarah agonizes over the life processes through which friends find they have less in common. A certain boy makes her uncomfortable with desire, which is difficult to process alongside her love for her girlfriend and previous experiences with asshole guys. Explaining to strangers her brother's accidental death at age eight isn't easy; neither is explaining what she likes about her hometown in western Virginia. Her writing is endearing if a bit disjointed, but that's what life is like. Narrative continuity is a luxury that only fictional characters can afford, and Sarah's more real than that. (AC)

\$2/trade, Sarah Arrl, PO Box 816, North Tazewell, VA 24630, piratesarah@gmail.com

Welcome to Flavor Country #6

At the outset of this issue, Kurt Morris describes his life as a “perpetual state of depression, anxiety, apathy, and alienation.” This goes on for about sixty pages, with some entries entitled, “The Things About Wanting to Die,” and “Who Would Miss Me if I Was Dead?” You know, I think this guy is depressed. After a couple of introductions and his melancholy worldview statement, he begins his life story, which—12 pages later—ends at second grade. So, let's assume Kurt is about eight years old. Much of the zine deals with his nihilistic struggle to cope with the slow, painful hemorrhage called Everyday Life. Another huge chunk deals with his struggles as a god-loving individual, but not subscribing to institutional restraints of mainstream Christianity. I personally think the two topics could be related. Chin up, bro! You may feel that life handed you a batch of stinky, rotten, pussing, and moldy lemons now, but—believe me—puberty is just a serious pain in the ass. (VC)

\$1 to Kurt/Welcome to Flavor Country, 835 Ashland #4, South Bend, IN 46616

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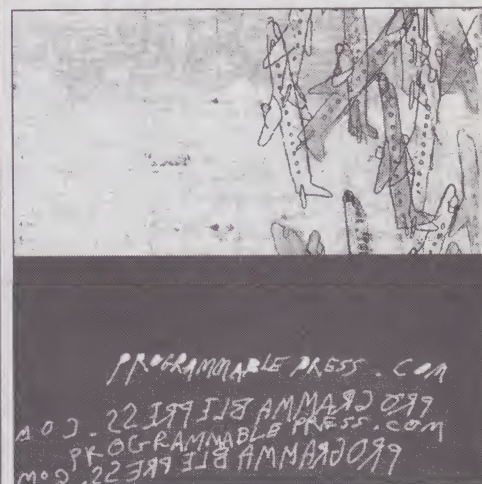
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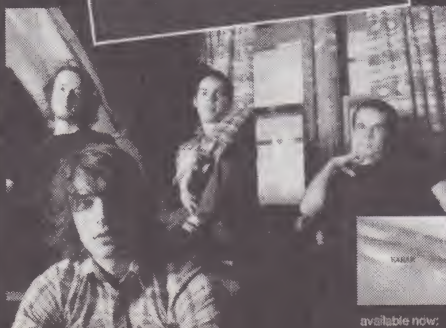
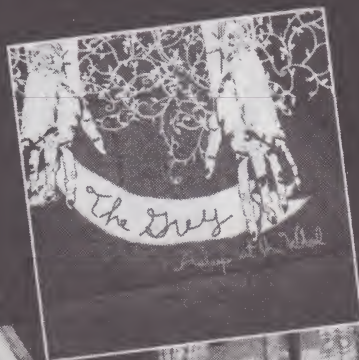
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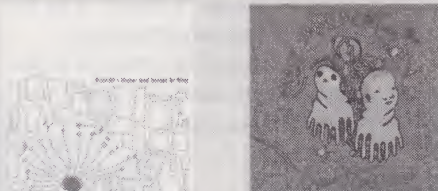


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Where to find more information
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interviewed this issue:

Harvey Pekar

Keep an eye out for the new *American Splendor* from DC Comics at www.dccomics.com. The fictional Harvey shares screen time with the real one in the 2003 film *American Splendor* from Fine Line Features. It's a total movie tie-in (Harvey was a paid blogger for awhile) but that shouldn't stop you from checking out Harveypekar.com. Finally, type in "Pekar" at Youtube.com to see Harvey speak and Letterman freak.

Michelle Tea

The wildly prolific Tea's novel *Rose of No Man's Land* (MacAdam/Cage Publishing), is on sale now. Books, writings, photos, FAQs, and more can be perused in this "Michelle Tea Shrine" at www.purpleglitter.com/michelle_tea/.

Ian Svenonius

The official website for *Weird War* is the tongue-twisting www.weirdwarworld.com. If you would like *Weird War* to be your friend, you can do the inviting at www.myspace.com/weirdwarworld. *Weird War*'s music and Ian's book *The Psychic Soviet* are all available from Drag City at www.dragcity.com.

T Cooper

Bio, links, and a fetching portrait of the author posing with a sock monkey await you at www.t-cooper.com. Cooper's novel *Lipshitz Six*, or *Two Angry Blondes*, published by Penguin Books' Dutton Adult imprint, is available as either traditional, bound text or zesty, unabridged audio at booksellers who know what's up.

Jeff Somers

Whether it's free, plain-text archives of *The Inner Swine*, free Baby Levon screensavers, or a few things that aren't free, yet are reasonably

priced, you'll find it all at www.innerswine.com. They trade ads with other zinesters—details on the website—so jump on that.

Zine and Ephemeral Print Archivists

Wherever you are in the country, you'll find it worth your while to take a trip to your local radical zine archive.

- The Prelinger Library is located at 301 8th Street, Room 215, San Francisco, CA 94110, or online at www.prelingerlibrary.org.

- QZAP, the Queer Zine Archive Project, is located at 2935 N. Fratney Street, Milwaukee, WI 53212, but don't miss their website at www.qzap.org.

- The Zine Archive and Publishing Project (ZAPP) is at: 1634 11th Ave Seattle, WA 98122, www.hugohouse.org/programs/zine.html.

- Grab a cup of joe and wander on down to the basement of MoJoe's Hot House to peruse the archives of the Chicago Underground Library: 2849 W Belmont, Chicago, IL 60618, or via the Internet at www.underground-library.org.

- The Barnard College Zine Library is at Barnard College: 3009 Broadway, NY 10027, also: www.barnard.edu/library/zines.

Brian Coleman

Kick it old-school style with Brian's fine book, *Rakim Told Me*, published by his own hands at Wax Facts Press. www.waxfacts.com.

Cindy Ovenrack Crabb

Zines, a DIY guide to preventing sexual assault, and advice for coping with aphids on tomato plants all hang out at www.dorisdoris.com, the website so nice they named it thrice. You can also contact Cindy via Doris, PO Box 1734, Asheville, NC 28802.

Anthony Arnove

Anthony Arnove's book *Iraq: The Logic of Withdrawal* is available from The New Press at www.thenewpress.com. Over 100 of Arnove's

writings are archived on the ZNet website at www.zmag.org.

articles in this issue:

A Week In The Life Of An Independent Bookseller

Take a gander at www.booksense.com to see almost 800 independent booksellers who have both an Internet and a storefront presence. Our reporter, Liz Mason, manages one in Chicago called Quimby's Queer Store. Go visit online at www.quimbys.com or offline at 1854 West North Avenue. Bring her a cookie. She loves those.

TransZines

Trans Spirituality is available from: Jen Durr Press, N9494 Haltur Lane, Eagle WI 53119, or via e-mail at jendurrrpress@gmail.com. It is free but intended for incarcerated trans folk so if that's not you, send some money, OK?

Drop a line to trannyroadshow@yahoo.com to request your copy of *Transcendence*.

A copy of *Some Things are Better Left Undissected* can be yours if you contact daedsider@gmail.com.

Crazy Pink Revolver is kicking it old school at Crazy Pink Revolver, P.O. Box 58203, Philadelphia, PA 19102.

The Queer Zine Archive Project—again—is located online at www.qzap.org. The Denver Zine Library's website is: www.denverzinelibrary.org, and the rad Grrrl Zine Network is: www.grrrlzines.net.

Utne Turns a New Page

Utne is online at www.utne.com; Ogden Publications does their thing at www.ogdenpubs.com.

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INSOUND



ROY
Killed John Train

Killed John Train is the second full length by Roy, a band made up of members from Botch, These Arms are Snakes, and Harkonen. While the melodies, smart lyrics, and genre-hopping of previous work are still present, Roy has pushed ahead into new territories.

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The Body, The Blood, The Machine

With a wider, brighter, and wilder sound than anything The Thermals have done in the past, *The Body, The Blood, The Machine* adds walls of guitars & organs to the mix, while still retaining the gritty post-pop-punk sound for which The Thermals are globally famous.

SUB POP



WOLF EYES
The Human Animal

Songs rotten with metal, reeds, consciousness-erasing islands of black doom; bass-heavy rippers, late-night free-terror jams, afflicted dog-hearts, underwater crabs: pure mayhem.

SUB POP



THE ADORED
A New Language

The Adored create a sound that mixes a danceable Britpop vibe with power-pop hooks over a classic punk backbone. "Overpoweringly upbeat" - *Washington Post*

V2



TRISTEZA
En Nuestro Desafio CD+DVD

The nine brand-new tracks on the CD find Tristeza in an ambient haze rolling along dubbed-out bass-lines and abstract compositions. The DVD contains a 30 minute tour film and the video for "Stumble On Air" from *A Colores*.

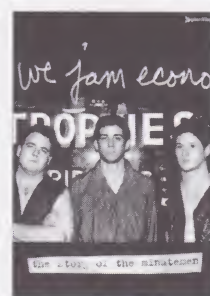
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SUGARCULT
Lights Out

Forget what you think you know about Sugarcult. The LA-based quartet's third album, *Lights Out*, is a modern rock revelation - and the band's finest release to date. Features "Do It Alone."

V2



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Change Never Lasts is a heartfelt ride through the lives of 5 kids from the Bay Area. They bring the energy and aggression of early SAVES THE DAY and KID DYNAMITE, and the polished strong songwriting that takes other bands years to achieve. **FIRST TO LEAVE** gives you 10 blistering tracks and one acoustic song to let you know they still know how to have fun. Get ready to jump up and down and scream your head off.

FIST TO LEAVE
Change Never Lasts
SC012: CD
Out Now! on Straight On Records



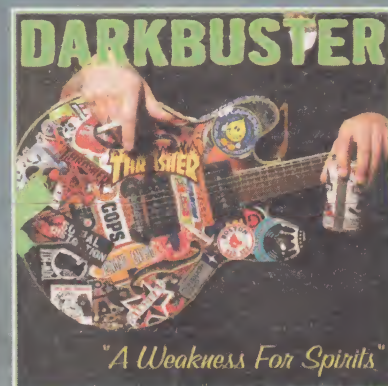
RIFU is a political hardcore punk band from Trondheim, Norway. As the album title indicates, **RIFU** is music for the revolution! *Bombs For Food, Mines For Freedom* bristles with rage, energy and ungovernable power. Their lyrics are highly political and uncompromising. By participating in the making of counterculture and promoting its values, **RIFU** believe they can make a difference.

RIFU
Bombs For Food, Mines For Freedom
GX118: CD
Out 8/8/2006 on Go-kart Records



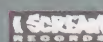
This is the latest low-priced sampler from the folks at Go-kart. The first 3 CDs in this series have sold 100,000+ copies worldwide and this one should fly off the shelves just as fast. This latest audio assault contains tracks from the new breed of Go-kart bands including THE SHOCKER, COUGARS, I FARM, TRANSMISSION, RIFU, TEN FOOT POLE and more. Also includes a few unreleased tracks. These are the bands everyone will be talking about tomorrow.

V/A
Go-kart Vs. The Corporate Giant 4
GX123: CD
Out 8/29/2006 on Go-kart Records



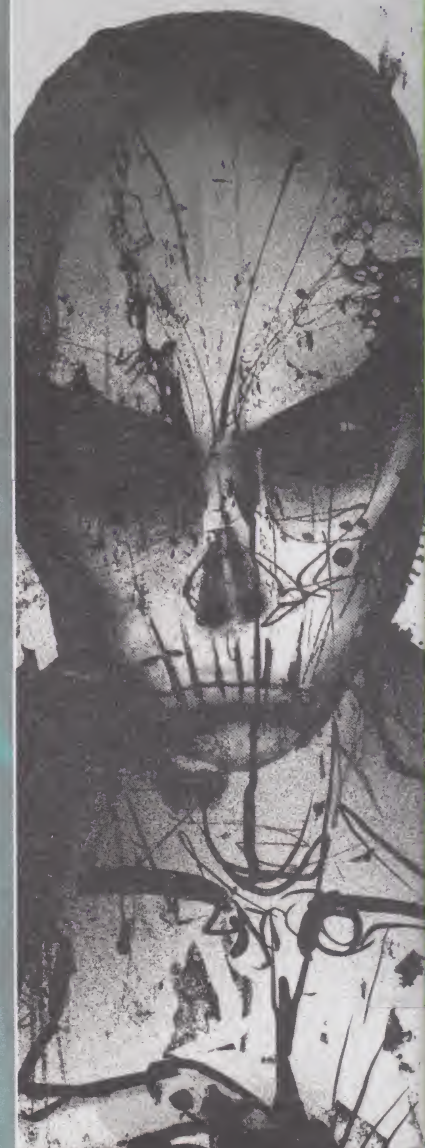
DARKBUSTER is a crowd favorite with their hilariously witty brand of booze soaked music, mixing sounds from Ska to Doo-Wop, Rockabilly, and Punk. *A Weakness For Spirits* features guest spots from Dicky Barrett (MIGHTY MIGHTY BOSSTONES) & Ken Casey (DROPKICK MURPHYS). **DARKBUSTER** will be touring the United States and Canada with DROPKICK MURPHYS, STREET DOGS, and the Vans Warped Tour.

DARKBUSTER
A Weakness For Spirits
ISCR830: CD
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MERCY KILLERS / ENEMY ROSE
...And To Become One
ISCR831
Out 8/8/2006 on I Stream Records



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...THE SAVED, TSOL, GENERATION X,
...with the inspiration needed to
...keeping all the while keeping in
...and pose of their punk rock forefa-
...bands such as THE STONES,
...and HANOI ROCKS. These
...love it or leave it!

FIST TO LEAVE

Change Never Lasts

SO012: CD

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V/A

Go-kart Vs. The Corporate Giant 4

GK123: CD

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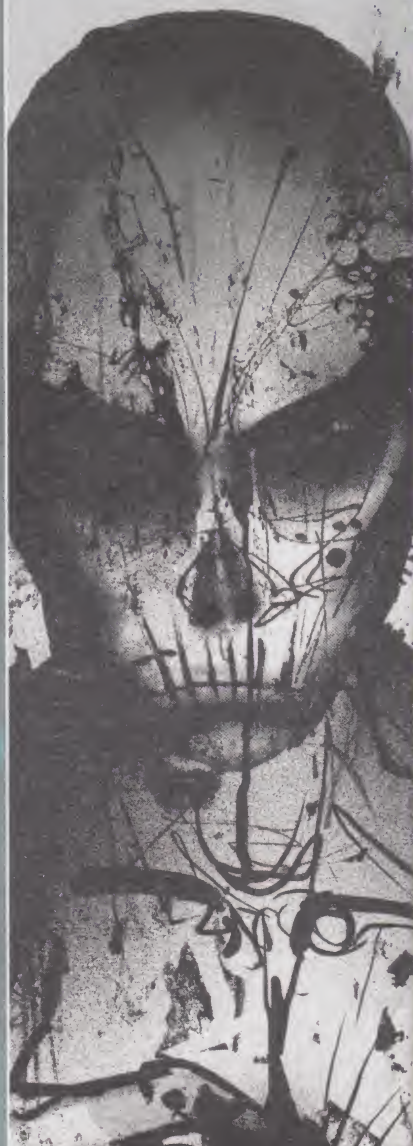


MERCY KILLERS / ENEMY ROSE

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punk planet 75

Sept and Oct 06

People are out there creating some really good stuff but it's not getting out to the audience, maybe because of distribution problems. —Harvey Pekar

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